POLITICAL POWER AND DISTANCIATION

BY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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...reasoning with loose concepts will often demand judgment and vigilance.

-Black

The question of power remains a total enigma. Who exercises power? And in what sphere?

-Foucault

What is power? What is the nature of the concept of power? Political theorists have attempted to answer these questions for many years. Plato sought an answer to a similar question in The Republic, that being: "What is Justice?" (**to dikaion**). More recently, social and political theorists have, in the discourse of modernity and post-modernity, assayed the concept of power with much vigor. In a mode not wholly dissimilar to Plato, modern academics have investigated the essence, the **Idea**, of power, in an attempt to elucidate that which it is in itself. Some contending schools of thought have chosen a more analytic route, while others have evaluated the notion of power from within a continental horizon. In practically all Western political theory, however, the grandiloquence of power has been acknowledged and appreciated; it is often seen as the **sine qua non** of politics itself.

We will undertake to investigate the nature of the concept of power. To provide a contextual background for our examination of the concept, we will explicate some of its more important historical characterizations. With this theoretical setting in place, we will move to the question of "essential contestability," a topical and important consideration for all of the concepts of social and political theory-- power included. Our investigation will

scrutinize the schematic conceptions of power found in recent political works, so as to hopefully enable us to advance a cogent schema of our own; what becomes quite clear, it appears, is that the nature of power is in many ways parallel to Ricoeur's notion of distanciation. Power, we will see, is essentially exercised in a sphere which is ironically separated from ourselves by a yawning interstice: it proves to be merely contingently related to our intentions, interests, preferences, deliberations, and that which we can foresee.

CHAPTER ONE: Historical Characterizations of Power

Historical characterizations of power have their roots in the 16th century writings of Thomas Hobbes. In his works De Corpore and Leviathan, Hobbes delineates two types of power: one which relates to physical objects, and one which is peculiar to the political realm (1). Aside from the fact that Hobbes is one of the most influential political theorists of all time, a good reason to investigate Hobbes' conception of power is that the essential question which he attempts to answer is remarkably like our own: Hobbes is concerned with **what power is**, as opposed to what the organizational rule(s) of power happen to be (2).

However, aside from the fact that Hobbes' analysis of power is analogous to our own, there are other good reasons to undertake an explication of Hobbesian theory, which Connolly describes in Political Theory and Modernity:

> World historical figures need not be confined to the context of their thought because, first, thought is itself a creative response to particular conditions irreducible to its preconditions of existence, second, highly creative thinkers transcend and transfigure understandings of their own time, and, third, those in other times and places who use these texts as a prod to their own thought often come to them with questions, interests, and anxieties divergent from those which governed the composition of the texts. Thinking is often advanced by lifting theories out of contexts in which they were created.
>
> (3)

Although Connolly's acumen shines through in all of the above remarks, it is his third point which is most pertinent. The mere fact that Hobbes deals with the concept of power, aside from contextual and historical concerns, justifies an examination of his work. It is possible, even probable, that an analysis of Hobbesian political theory will advance our own.

In De Corpore, Hobbes devotes the ninth and tenth chapters to examinations of (respectively): cause and effect, and power and action. Hobbes argues that power and act, with respect to the realm of physical objects, correspond to the notions of cause and effect. He states that there is such a thing as "plenary power" (4), which encompasses both "active" and "passive" power:

> the power of the agent is that which is also called active power...the power of the patient (is) commonly called passive power.
>
> (5)

Plenary power, it is claimed, consists in the coalescence of active and passive powers, and is thus synonymous with the notion of an **entire cause** (6): both plenary power and the entire cause "consist in the sum or aggregate of all the accidents" (7). Hobbes maintains that, in a (physical) power relationship, both the active and passive objects require a certain sort of specific, ancillary power, for plenary (full) power to come forth.

The power of the active and passive objects, he states, is parallel to the "aggregate of all the accidents" (8) required for the production of an act. That is, Hobbes believes that there are necessary preconditions for both agent and patient in a relationship of physical power. Hobbes argues that there must be a direct relationship between active and passive objects, if plenary power is to exist. "Active and passive" powers, he writes,:

> are parts only of plenary and entire power; nor, except they be joined, can any act proceed from them; and therefore these powers, as I said in the first article, are but conditional, namely, the agent has power, if it be applied to a patient; and the patient has power, if it be applied to an agent; otherwise neither of them have power, nor can the accidents, which are in them severally, be properly called powers; nor any action be said to be possible for the power of the agent alone or of the patient alone.
>
> (9)

Plenary power, clearly, becomes viable only when active and passive powers are joined. Without plenary power, Hobbes states,:

> there will always be wanting some of those things, without which the act cannot be produced; wherefore that act shall never be produced; that is, that act is IMPOSSIBLE: and every act, which is not impossible, is POSSIBLE. Every act, therefore, which is possible, shall at some time be produced; for if it shall never be produced, then those things shall never concur which are requisite for the production of it; wherefore that act is **impossible**, by the definition; which was contrary to what was supposed.
>
> (10)

In the physical world, objects which lack the requisite

antecedent "accidents" (11) are precluded from attaining plenary power; from them, no acts can come forth. However, when active and passive powers are joined, it is argued, there will at some time be the production of an act. If no act is ever produced, Hobbes states, then the act was not possible in the first place.

Hobbes' notion of physical power is very interesting, especially with respect to his ideas of possible and impossible acts. Plenary power, or, perhaps, what we might call **potential power**, does not exist if no action ever takes place. Hobbes' notion (that potential power without action is vacuous) is of great importance to us, since modern discussions of political power often refer to the existence of power **regardless** of whether it is ever actualized. Although Hobbes discusses physical, not political, power in these passages of De Corpore, the question of whether power exists if it is never actualized, will prove to be of no small importance to our investigation.

The powers of individuals, according to Hobbes, are similar to the powers of the physical realm. In Leviathan, Chaps. X & XI, Hobbes explicates his concept of political power:

> The POWER **of a Man**, (to take it Universally), is his present means, to obtain some future apparent

> Good. And is either **Originall**, or **Instrumentall**.
> (12)

Hobbes' conception is one with some intuitive cogency, that an individual's power is a "present means" (perhaps, capacity) to get that which appears to be beneficial.

Hobbes' notion of Goodness, it must be said, is a relative one. In his discussion of Good and Evil, Hobbes writes:

> these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves
> (13)

Further, Hobbes defines Goodness (i.e. the Goodness of a thing) as "the object of any man's appetite or desire" (14). It becomes clear that (via transitive property) Hobbes conceives of power as an individual's means to satisfy his appetite or desire. Power, to Hobbes, seems to be a very selfish conception; a person's power, it is argued, lies in their ability to get what they want- to fill their appetite.

It is important to note that, in Leviathan, Hobbes distinguishes between **Original** and **Instrumental** power. Original (Natural) power, he writes:

> is the eminence of the Faculties of Body, or Mind: as extraordinary Strength, Forme, Prudence, Arts, Liberality, Nobility.
> (15)

These characteristics, clearly, are perceived as inherent in people; Natural power is a conglomeration of eminent character traits, originating in the mind and body of the individual. Instrumental power, on the other hand,:

> are those Powers, which acquired by (Natural powers), or by fortune, are means and Instruments to acquire more: as Riches, Reputation, Friends, ... and Good Luck.
>
> (16)

Hobbes maintains that these Instrumental powers are contingent upon Natural powers, for the most part: instrumental powers are derived from either Natural powers, or fortune. Thus, Hobbes appears to conceive of two types of political power, Natural and Instrumental. Natural powers are those which emerge from the mind and body of the individual. And, Instrumental powers are those powers which, stemming from Natural powers or fortune, enable a person to acquire more.

Hobbes' reference to the "acquisition of power," in his definition of Instrumental power, is linked to his notion that political power is essentially expansionistic. He is quite lucid on this matter:

> For the nature of Power, in this point, like to Fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies, which the further they go, make still the more hast.
>
> (16)

The nature of political power, it appears, is like that of physical power. Political power tends to increase itself:

it expands, "increasing as it proceeds," if it has the ability and opportunity to do so. Hobbes argues that political power is thus akin to physical power; the expansionistic tendencies of political power are analogous to the behaviour of, for instance, large rocks. It is as natural for power to increase itself, as it is for a heavy rock to pick up speed as it gravitates towards the earth.

Leviathan contains one other passage which is germane to Hobbes' conceptualization of political power. In Chapter XI ("**On the Difference of Manners**"), Hobbes makes an additional comment on the unending expansionism of power. He states:

> I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetualle and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death. And the cause of this, is not alwayes that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.
>
> (17)

We see here, that Hobbes' conception of political power definitely has an element of continuous expansion; the desire for power after power is both perpetual and restless. The reason for this, it is clear, is not that people cannot be content with moderate amounts of power. Rather, Hobbes proposes that the nature of political power is such, that to **ensure** an adequate amount of power, **more**

power must be sought.

One also notices that Hobbes refers to "the means to live well" in the above remarks on political power. Hampton seems to make good sense out of both this idea of living well, and the passage as a whole. She calls Hobbes' a "reasonable position" (18); that is, until our death, we will have certain needs and desires (e.g. the acquisition of food for tomorrow) which are never consummated in our lifetime (19). Further (as Kavka argues), although Hobbes does not say why **greater** power must be obtained, it is yet evident that expanded power is sought not necessarily as a means to some sort of better future, but "simply to assure maintaining one's satisfactory present standard" (20).

In Power: A New Social Analysis, Bertrand Russell, the quintessential philosopher and public figure, puts forth an interesting and influential conception of power. Written in 1938, Russell's work has become the foundation for some modern political theorists [notably, Dennis Wrong (21)], and contains the first schematic conceptualization of power. Russell's analysis of power is very thorough, and, although much of his work is devoted to decidedly normative considerations and derivative forms of power (e.g. Chaps. IV-XVIII), there is a basic, elemental conception of **what power is**, found in the early portion of the text.

Russell's intuitions with regard to the ubiquitous nature of power, are reflected in the writings of some prominent contemporary political theorists [e.g. Dahl, Ball, (22)]. In his idiomatically clear prose, Russell states:

> In the course of this book I shall be concerned to prove that the fundamental concept in political science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.
>
> (23)

It is evident that Russell has a high prioritization of power; he sees it as the concept which subsumes political science. We also notice a certain affinity to Hobbes in this passage; like Hobbes, Russell draws a parallel between political power and physical energy.

There is also another passage in which a similarity between Russell and Hobbes can be found:

> In the first place, there is power over human beings and power over dead matter or non-human forms of life. I shall be concerned mainly with power over human beings, but it will be necessary to remember that the chief cause of change in the modern world is the increased power over matter that we owe to science.
>
> (24)

Russell is clearly like Hobbes, in his distinction between physical and political power. However, Russell is quite candid about the relevance of scientific power to the political sphere: in modern times, he maintains, our increased power over the physical world has had much to do

with the social changes that have occurred. Evidently, although Russell is quite correct in recognizing the **connection** between physical power and social change, it should be noted that although physical power has **impetus** to the socio-political realm, such power does not affect the **nature** of political power **itself**.

Russell's schema is explicated by him as follows:

> Power may be defined as the production of intended effects...it is easy to say, roughly, that A has more power than B, if A achieves many intended effects and B only a few. (25)

Emerging from Russell's schema, is the implication that unintended effects are not the product of power relationships. That is to say, Russell argues that political power consists in the production of intended effects, but not in the production of unintended effects. If, for instance, a politician (**A**) desires that the leader of a pressure-group (**B**) convince his members to vote for **A**, and **B** does so, then Russell would say that **A** has exercised political power: **A** has produced an intended effect. However, if **A** were to simultaneously net himself $1,000,000 in donations, as a result of his conversations with **B**, Russell would say that power has not been exercised: the effects produced by **A**, in this case, though they are in **A**'s interest, are not **intended** in his conversations with **B**.

Russell contends that power over individuals is essentially co-extensive with the notion of influence. He states:

> Power over human beings may be classified by the manner of influencing individuals, or the type of organization involved...An individual may be influenced: **A**. By direct physical power over his body, e.g. when he is imprisoned or killed; **B**. By rewards and punishments as inducements, e.g. in giving or withholding employment; **C**. By influence on opinion, i.e. propaganda in its broadest sense.
>
> (26)

It would appear that, in the context of modern political theory, Russell makes an error in arguing that political power is co-extensive with influence; most political theorists see imprisonment, killing, and punishment as facets of **coercion**, not influence. However, it is not the case that he is errant with respect to a consideration of the distinction between influence and coercion. In Chap. XVII of Power: A New Social Analysis, Russell puts forth an argument which denies a clear demarcation between the two:

> It is not altogether true that persuasion is one thing and force is another. Many forms of persuasion--even many of which everybody approves--are really a kind of force...We do not say to (our children): "Some people think the earth is round, and others think it is flat; when you grow up, you can, if you like, examine the evidence and form your own conclusion." Instead of this we say: "The earth **is** round." By the time our children are old enough to examine the evidence, our propaganda has closed their minds, and the most persuasive arguments of the Flat Earth Society make no impression.
>
> (27)

Russell's point, here, is well-taken. There do indeed appear to be "forceful" types of socially-approved argumentation, which seem to preclude a clear distinction between force and persuasion, coercion and influence. As a result, Russell discusses influential and coercive powers in terms of **approximation**:

> The most important organizations are approximately distinguishable by the kind of power that they exert. The army and the police exercise coercive power over the body
>
> (28)

It is apparent that Russell is not simply errant in his conception of power as co-extensive with influence. Instead, he proposes a compelling argument against a clear distinction between influence and coercion. However, Russell **does** state that the police (for example) exercise coercive force, whereas he has argued that "direct physical power over the body" is a form of influence (29). Although we will take Russell's problem of demarcation seriously, it does not appear to be fruitful to accept the notion that **power** is co-extensive with **influence**, which is (at least sometimes) the same as **coercion**.

Russell's idea that "A has more power than B, if A achieves many intended effects and B only a few" (30), is a further point of interest. Russell has argued (as we have seen) that power is a "quantitative concept" (31), and, his resulting notion (that it is the **number** of

intended effects which matters) has evoked unfair criticism from such critics as Dorothy Emmett. In her paper "The Concept of Power," Emmett asks of Russell's schema:

> But is it useful to measure power by the **number** of achieved effects unless we take into consideration the **kind** of effect? **A** may have wanted to do a number of little things, and have succeeded in doing them all. **B**, after a life of frustration, may have at last succeeded in one big thing. Are we to say that **A** has more power than **B**?
>
> (32)

At first appearance, it might seem that Emmett levels a telling blow against Russell in this passage; however, she is instead being uncharitable. Russell, in fact, explicitly deals with the question of quantity versus quality with respect to intended effects:

> there is no exact means of comparing the power of two men of whom one can achieve one group of desires, and another another; e.g. given two artists of whom each wishes to paint good pictures and become rich, and of whom one succeeds in painting good pictures and the other in becoming rich, there is no way of estimating who has more power.
>
> (33)

It is apparent that Russell **does** concern himself with Emmett's sort of problematic consideration. He claims that, as is the case with influence and coercion, there is no clear way to qualitatively distinguish between intended effects. Russell's example is lucid: two people both intend to achieve **Q** and **R**. If one person achieves only **Q**, and the other only **R**, it is very difficult to see who has

exercised more power.

Emmett's criticisms, in this light, lose much of their punch; however, it could still be argued (in Emmett's defence) that in cases where **A** has achieved one very small intended effect, whereas **B** has achieved one very large intended effect, **B** clearly has more power than **A**; a conception of power which is anchored solely in quantification, would appear to be somewhat lacking.

Bertrand de Jouvenel's characterization of political power is definitely worth considering, although his project is not directly parallel to our investigation. de Jouvenel's major exegesis, On Power, incorporates some notions which bear upon our descriptive analysis of power, and will ultimately require careful consideration. The initial problem vis-à-vis de Jouvenel's political theory, is that he is "concerned...only with Power in large formations" (34). However, his ideas with respect to the perpetuation of political power, are definitely of interest to the modern political theorist.

Alongside de Jouvenel's stated concern for (chiefly) power in large formations, there is somewhat of an avoidance of a schematic characterization of political power. He does argue, however, that power "in its pure state consists...in command" (35). Later in his work, de

Jouvenel is more candid:

> We see, systematically set out, the logical way of the establishment of what may be called "national monarchy"...Power, as is clear at once, has not changed a jot: it is still what it always was, a system of command for its own sake and for its fruits.
>
> (36)

It might appear to some, as though de Jouvenel's conception of the essence of power is opaque. That is, in a consideration of what is meant by "command for its own sake and for its fruits," the inherent vagueness of the terms (e.g. fruits) seems to lend them to a multitude of interpretations. However, de Jouvenel is explicit at another point in his text, and gives a more transparent description of the essence of political power:

> we may now call (power) a standing corporation, which is obeyed from habit, has the means of physical compulsion, and is kept in being partly by the view taken of its strength, partly by the faith that it rules as of right (in other words, legitimacy), and partly by the hope of its beneficience.
>
> (37)

We infer immediately from this passage, that de Jouvenel conceives of power as an extant, reified body ("corporation"), not wholly dissimilar from what modern political theorists might call the state. Power, to de Jouvenel, appears to be an existing political set of institutions, which rules through both legitimized and coercively illegitimate means.

de Jouvenel's notion that political power (in his

terms) is "kept in being by the view taken of its strength," is of crucial importance. We will see how, in our discussion of modern conceptions of political power, de Jouvenel's idea is profound. Further, in the delineation of our own schema it will become apparent that his notion is of the utmost relevance to an emergent paradox of political society. Clearly, although de Jouvenel's investigation is not entirely analogous to our own, there is an invaluable element in his conception of how power is perpetuated; how it is "kept in being."

Our examination of historical characterizations of power finds its terminus in the works of Robert MacIver. His well-written book The Web of Government, marks the end of the historic era belonging to such theorists as Hobbes, Russell, De Jouvenel, and himself. Published in 1947, MacIver's theoretical exegesis directly preceeds more modern conceptions of power; Dahl had his first noteworthy paper on power published in 1957 (38). Although the distinction is somewhat crude, it seems to be the case that there is a demarcation to be made between MacIver and Dahl. Prior to Dahl, the concept of power tends to be discussed in a larger, more general fashion (e.g. de Jouvenel's lengthy text on power **writ large**). However, Dahl (and most political theorists to follow) takes up the notion that power can be expressed schematically, in terms

of **A** (those who have power) and **B** (those who are affected by power). The importance of Dahl's work, as we shall see, is paramount: not simply because he proposes a relatively concise conception of power, but because his characterization of political power forges new paths for political theorists to pursue.

In the fifth chapter of The Web of Government, MacIver begins his basic discussion of power. Power, he argues, is a concept with sub-fields; social and political power being the most noteworthy. Ironically, in the context of our investigation of the nature of political power, MacIver's conception of social power proves to be quite compelling (and useful), while his characterization of political power is somewhat convoluted.

There are two main passages in which MacIver descants his notion of social power. The first appears at the commencement of the fifth chapter, where he begins:

> By social power we mean the capacity in any relationship to command the service and compliance of others.
>
> (39)

Here, MacIver claims that power is a relational capacity, and that the essential relation in power is one of command and compliance. Evidently, the unqualified notions of "command" and "compliance" lend themselves to a serious opacity; however, in the second passage, MacIver clarifies

his position:

> By social power we mean the capacity to control the behavior of others either directly by fiat or indirectly by the manipulation of available means. Property and status are thus sources of power.
>
> (40)

It is evident, in this section, that MacIver's conception of power is slightly more complex than could be inferred from the first passage. The control of behaviour, to which MacIver refers, takes two forms: direct and indirect. Direct control, he maintains, is power manifested in decree, whereas indirect control consists in the manipulation of individuals. And, we notice that MacIver makes the ancillary claim that status and property are pivotal to the concept of social power; they are primary sources from which social power springs.

It would seem that MacIver's characterization of social power has a decidedly negative implication with reference to the welfare of those who are affected by power. That is, his notions of control by "fiat" and "manipulation," seem to convey a malevolent element with respect to those who are affected by the power-holder(s). Although MacIver is not lucid on this question (i.e. whether power is **always** exercised against the interests of others), there are more modern political theorists [notably, Lukes (41)] who argue that power is (as MacIver seems to imply) always exercised "in a manner contrary to B's interests" (42).

After his delineation of social power, MacIver undertakes an explication of political power. Political power, he claims, is quite clearly distinct from social power:

> We must now make it clear that, whatever its derivation, the power of government is different from the power which gains access to it. What status and property establish under the given conditions is to determine **who** shall hold the reins of political power, rather than **what** shall be the essential functions of that power. For under all conditions political power is the final regulatory control of the social order...To a vastly greater extent government does not create the social order that it sustains. Hence the power of government is entirely different in kind from the powers that may at any time determine who shall govern.
>
> (43)

In this passage, MacIver attempts to explicate the essence of political power. Political power, it is claimed, is the final, regulatory control of society. Further, he states that the nature of political power is different from the essence of social power, in the following way: social powers determine <u>who</u> shall govern, whereas political power (which is contingent upon social power) is the final control of a society, determining <u>what</u> the essential functions of social power shall be.

At first view, MacIver's distinction appears to be rather convincing; yet it is quite problematic. Granted, social forces may create political structures and institutions. However, it would still seem to be the case

that these "social" forces remain as a part of the structures and institutions themselves, after their creation has taken place. That is to say, although the structure of the essential function of political power (which is regulation, in his view) may supervene upon so-called "social" power, MacIver does not show that political power is without any element of the "behavioral control" (44) which is supposedly peculiar to social power. Nonetheless, MacIver's idea of power as a "relational capacity" is of immeasurable worth to our investigation, and justifies in itself an examination of his particular characterization of power.

The historical characterizations of power which we have seen, clearly contain elements of thought which are crucial to our investigation. Hobbes' conception of power as a "present means" (45), and his distinction between physical and political power, are two notions which we will consider very seriously. Russell, who also distinguishes between physical and political power, shows his perspicacity in the recognition of power as the ubiquitous concept in political theory. Our analysis of power will show, as per Russell's intuitions, that the concept is definitely of pivotal theoretical importance.

In de Jouvenel's work, we have encountered an interesting idea with respect to the perpetuation of

power, that it is: "kept in being by the view taken of its strength" (46). Views of strength, it would seem, are essentially doxastic; that is, a "view" (in this sense) appears to be a "belief." As we shall see, the beliefs of individuals, as de Jouvenel rightly points out, are indeed of crucial importance to a comprehensive conception of power.

Finally, MacIver's notion that power is a "relational capacity" (47) has a distinct relevance to our analysis of the concept. MacIver is similar to Hobbes in this respect; his idea of a "relational capacity" seems to be quite similar to Hobbes' "present means." Our emergent schema will definitely involve the notion of power as some sort of relation (i.e. **A** in relation to **B**), and we will certainly consider the question of whether power is a capacity which exists if it is never actualized.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE:

1) A distinction made by Warrender in Chap. XV.
2) Clegg (1989), p. 27.
3) Clegg (1989), p. 23.
4) Hobbes, Collected Works, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chap. X, Paragraph 1.
5) **ibid.**
6) **ibid.**
7) **ibid.**
8) **ibid.**
9) Hobbes, Collected Works, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chap. X, Paragraph 3.
10) Hobbes, Collected Works, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chap. X, Paragraph 4.
11) Hobbes, Collected Works, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chap. X, Paragraph 1.
12) Hobbes, Leviathan, X, 7, 41.
13) Hobbes, Leviathan, VI, 1, 24.
14) **ibid.**
15) Hobbes, Leviathan, X, 7, 41.
16) **ibid.**
17) Hobbes, Leviathan, XI, 2, 47.
18) Hampton, p. 59.
19) **ibid.**
20) Kavka, p. 95.
21) Clegg (1989), p. 73.
22) For an elaboration of this laudatory notion, see Ball's (1975) "Models of Power: Past and Present", Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, July: 211-22, Dahl's (1957) "The Concept of Power", Behavioral Science, 2: 201-5, and Dahl's (1963) Modern Political Analysis.
23) Russell, p. 10.
24) Russell, p. 35.
25) **ibid.**
26) Russell, pp. 35-36.
27) Russell, pp. 280-81.
28) Russell, p. 37.
29) Russell, p. 36.
30) Russell, p. 35.
31) **ibid.**
32) Emmett, p. 4.
33) Russell, p. 35.
34) de Jouvenel (1949), p. 98.
35) **ibid.**
36) de Jouvenel (1949), p. 104.
37) de Jouvenel (1949), p. 25.
38) See Dahl (1957) "The Concept of Power", Behavioral Science, 2: 201-5.
39) MacIver, p. 82.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE (Contd.):

40) MacIver, p. 87.
41) Best expressed in Lukes' (1974) Power: A Radical View, p. 39.
42) ibid.
43) MacIver, p. 94.
44) MacIver, p. 87.
45) Hobbes, Leviathan, X, 7, 41.
46) de Jouvenel (1945), p. 25.
47) MacIver, p. 42.

CHAPTER TWO: ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPTS

The concept of political power, like the other concepts of political theory, has recently been subjected to an elenchus called "essential contestability." The notion of essential contestability was brought forth in W.B. Gallie's pioneer paper "Essentially Contested Concepts," originally given at the Meeting of the Aristotelian Society in 1956. Since that time, Gallie's idea has been molded and transformed by political theorists such as Connolly, Gray, Swanton, and Grafstein. Several interesting and profoundly influential versions of essential contestability have emerged to date; it is apparent that we must carefully examine and evaluate the notion of essential contestability, if we are to properly contextualize and lend cogency to our conception of political power.

Our examination of essential contestability will show that, in the majority of cases [Gallie, Connolly, Grafstein (1)], normative elements are considered to be crucial to essentially contested concepts. Although we will concede some level of normative content, we will deny that our concept of power is value-laden. Further, our investigation will support Grafstein's realism (2) apropos of the notion of essential contestability, and we will argue that the idea of differing **degrees of**

contestability, with respect to political concepts, is a viable one.

In "Essentially Contested Concepts," W.B. Gallie begins with the observation that conceptual discussions often yield disagreements about the meanings of terms. Analysis, he argues, shows that each concept has a multifarious nature with respect to definition:

> We find groups of people disagreeing about the proper use of the concepts, **e.g.**, of art, of democracy, of the Christian tradition. When we examine the different uses of these terms and the characteristic arguments in which they figure we soon see that there is no one clearly definable general use of any of them which can be set up as the correct or standard use.
>
> (3)

Gallie sets out his perspective quite clearly: disputes about certain concepts exist, and no particular definition of any such concept can be held up as "correct." In the context of these disputes, Gallie delineates his notion of essential contestability:

> I want to show that there are apparently endless disputes for which neither (psychological causes nor metaphysical afflictions) **need** be the correct (explanation). Further, I shall try to show that there are disputes, centred on the concepts which I have just mentioned, which are perfectly genuine: which although not resolvable by argument of any kind, are nevertheless sustained by perfectly respectable arguments and evidence.
>
> (4)

Genuine disputes, it is claimed, come out of discussions of certain concepts (e.g. art, democracy). These disputes are, as per their corresponding concepts, **sustainable** by

both argument and evidence; yet, no argument can ultimately **resolve** them.

Gallie's point here, is, at first glance, persuasive: it might appear likely that no argument could ever settle a conceptual dispute. Yet, the point is problematic in two ways. First, we wonder why it is the case that it is essentially impossible to resolve some conceptual disagreements. Second, it does not seem likely that two differing conceptions of a purportedly essentially contestable concept, would be **equally** sustainable. That is to say, two immediate problems come to the fore in Gallie's paper: why certain conceptual problems are unresolvable, and whether differing conceptions are equally compelling.

In the third section of his paper, "The Conditions of Essential Contestedness," Gallie claims that in order for a concept to be essentially contested, it "must possess" (5) certain characteristics. The first criterion, it appears, distinguishes his notion of an essentially contested concept, from the concept of political power (as we will describe it):

> In order to count as essentially contested, in the sense just illustrated, a concept must possess the four following characteristics: --- (I) it must be **appraisive** in the sense that it signifies or accredits some kind of valued achievement.
>
> (6)

Gallie's first criterion involves the normative notion of appraisal; without an element of appraisal, he claims, a concept is not essentially contestable. Granted, some characterizations of the concept of power may fall into such a rut (for instance, a naive concept of power which maintains that all power-holders are bad). However, our conception of political power will not involve any noteworthy level of appraisal, explicit or implicit. In showing the essential value-neutrality of our emergent concept of power, we will elucidate the difference between a power-holder (which is non-appraisive), and a "champion" (7) (Gallie's example of an appraisive concept).

In his discussion of the concept of democracy, it becomes clear that Gallie does not see power as an essentially contested concept. In the case of the concept of democracy, he states, questions of "actual practice" are not relevant to his essential contestability thesis:

> I want first to make clear, what uses of (democracy) are **not** here to be discussed. Sometimes in a political argument actual political conditions or actions are referred to and then the question is put: "Can you call **that** democratic?" or "Is this an example of your democracy?" But questions of actual practice, vindicating or belying certain uses of the term "democracy" are not here our concern.
>
> (8)

That is, the descriptive analysis of a concept like democracy, which is rooted in questions such as "What is democracy?" (or, "What is power?") are **not** his concern.

Gallie sees that questions concerning the characterization of concepts, which "vindicate or (belie) certain uses of the term," take place **outside** of the realm of appraisal.

Democracy, he maintains, is an essentially contested concept for another reason-- it is a concept which contains:

> certain political aspirations which have been embodied in countless slave, peasant, national, and middle-class revolts and revolutions...These aspirations are evidently centred in a demand for increased equality: or, to put it negatively, they are advanced against governments and social orders whose aim is to prolong gross forms of inequality
>
> (9)

Gallie believes that the concept of democracy is essentially contestable, as it has an inchoate, appraisive element: the prioritization of equality. Let us grant him this; our eventual conception of political power will **not be an essentially contested concept in Gallie's terms.** With respect to appraisal, power-holders and subjects will not turn out to be "good," "bad," "better," or "worse" in our characterization of power. Our concept will be, in this sense, normatively neutral.

In The Terms of Political Discourse, William Connolly devotes a full chapter to the analysis of essentially contested concepts. The shortcoming of Gallie, Connolly proposes, is his distinction between descriptive and normative concepts [i.e. Gallie's strict criterion of

"appraisal" (10)]. In fact, Connolly argues, Gallie overlooks the connection between descriptive concepts and operational definitions:

> (Gallie) doesn't seem to see that descriptive concepts, which are after all the ones pertinent to scientific work, can be defined operationally, enabling investigators with different ideologies to accept common definitions and to adopt the same impersonal tests in applying these shared concepts to determinate states of affairs
>
> (11)

Connolly's project, with regard to essential contestability, is one which (as we shall see) ultimately provides strong argumentation against the strict descriptive/normative distinction. Yet, in the context of the concept of power, Connolly's emergent perspective on the essential contestability of power appears to be somewhat off the mark.

Connolly begins his analysis of essential contestability with an explication of "cluster concepts":

> To make the concept of politics intelligible we must display its complex connections with a host of other concepts to which it is related; clarification of the concept of politics thereby involves the elaboration of the broader conceptual system within which it is implicated... We shall call a concept with these characteristics a cluster concept.
>
> (12)

Connolly justifies his notion of a cluster concept in an elaborate and thorough fashion. Primarily, he considers the concept-in-question (politics, in this case), and proposes that disputes over definitional criteria will

make the concept complex. He lists eight criteria which might satisfactorily describe the concept of politics, and argues that several problems result from the proffered characterization. First, he argues that, of the eight criteria, there are problems in determining **how many** are sufficient "to establish an act or practice as political" (13). Further, Connolly maintains that various individuals will "weight the importance of shared criteria differently" (14); that is to say, that one person might consider a characteristic-in-question to be **more pivotal** to the concept of politics, than would another person.

Most importantly, Connolly makes the excellent point that each particular criterion of the concept-in-question "makes reference to new concepts" (15), and, that all ancillary concepts will require similar clarification. Cluster concepts, as Connolly delineates them, are thus problematic vis-à-vis definition: their characteristic criteria will evoke disagreement in terms of sufficiency and weight, and the ancillary concepts to which they refer, will likely be subject to similar scrutiny. And, in terms of essential contestability, Connolly is candid:

> Contests persist over the proper interpretation of the partly shared idea of politics, and we might say that its very characteristics as a cluster concept provide the space within which such contests emerge.
>
> (16)

Connolly proceeds to take issue with the descriptive/ normative distinction. "Essentially contested concepts," he claims,:

> are typically **appraisive** in that to call something a "work of art" or a "democracy" is both to describe it and to ascribe a value to it or express a commitment with respect to it.
>
> (17)

We notice that Connolly is in agreement with Gallie here: he uses the term "appraisive," and refers to the "work of art" and the "democracy" as paradigmatic essentially contested concepts. An obvious concern comes to the fore at this point: if Connolly is in essential agreement with Gallie, can we not avoid his concerns in the same way?

Connolly, clearly, takes Gallie's position further in his section on the descriptive/normative distinction; his concerns are not easily dismissed. He states that, in the first place, description consists in characterization, and that all characterization proceeds from a certain normative perspective:

> To describe a situation is not to name something, but to characterize it...A description does not refer to data or elements that are bound together merely on the basis of similarities adhering in them, but to describe is to characterize a situation from the vantage point of certain intents, purposes, or standards.
>
> (18)

It quickly becomes clear to us, that Connolly's intention is to show the unclear demarcation between descriptive and

normative concepts: description, he claims, is linked to "certain intents, purposes, or standards." Each of these notions are, obviously, normatively grounded; they all supervene on a person's values.

We will not take great issue with this point. Connolly would appear to be correct, in arguing that intents, purposes, and standards factor into much of what we might call description. However, we can respond with the consideration that certain standards are inherent in **all** description, e.g. the standard of clarity in description, which is apparently universally virtuous. Unless Connolly wants to argue that **all concepts** are essentially contestable, he will have to show how essentially contested concepts differ from concepts in general.

We see that, as one might expect, Connolly does not subscribe to the notion that all concepts are essentially contestable:

> Not all concepts in politics are formed from a moral, or, more broadly, normative point of view, but many are.
>
> (19)

That is, many of the concepts of political theory are what Gallie (and Connolly) would call "appraisive"; however, some are not. Connolly appears to concede that the consideration of "intents, purposes, or standards" (20) does not apply to some concepts in political theory (he

does not, however, give any examples).

Power, Connolly argues, is an essentially contested concept of political theory; it is linked to the normative notion of **responsibility**. "Power," he states,:

> is a contestable concept, partly because of its conceptual connection to our ideas of responsibility , and these contests themselves form a part of our politics.
>
> (21)

Further, Connolly maintains that contests over the concept of power are "over the criteria of application (and) the form its exercise will take" (22). Both of these considerations clearly have their contestable roots in his idea of "responsibility."

Connolly claims that responsibility is the normative core of the concept of power, that it is responsibility which makes power an essentially contested concept:

> For to acknowledge power over others is to implicate oneself in responsibility for certain events and to put oneself in a position where **justification** for the limits placed on others is expected.
>
> (23)

Unfortunately, we must take issue with Connolly's argumentation here: there does not appear to be any good reason to accept his seemingly arbitrary connection between power and responsibility. Certainly, **some** conceptions of political power see a close relationship of responsibility between the exercise of power and the

individual. However, not all conceptions are so simple: our investigation of power will show how power is actually **contingently related to both interests and intentions.** In the following chapters, our cogitation will show how political power is actually a concept divorced from responsibility-- power works in a sphere outside of the interests, intentions, and (thus) the responsibilites of people.

Connolly's argumentation culminates in a synoptical passage, in which he maintains that the cluster concepts of political theory are linked to their normative **raison d'etre:**

> The clarified thesis, then, is this: `Democracy' --and other concepts like it--displays in our discourse over a normal range of cases a close connection between its criteria and its normative point.
>
> (24)

Connolly's position is quite clear; however, we are still at odds with his notion that the concept of power is like democracy in this way. The concept of power, it would seem, does not have to be "closely connected" to any significant notion of (as Connolly argues) "responsibility" (25).

Connolly makes a further remark with respect to the descriptive/normative distinction, which is apparently pertinent. He argues that those who wish to preserve a

strict demarcation between normative and descriptive will run into problems in "adjusting the concept to new situations" (26). In this view, Connolly proposes, there will be no basis for making any conceptual adjustments, since the concept is (purportedly) purely descriptive. We will eschew the consideration of whether this is an actual problem for theorists who wish to maintain a distinction between the descriptive and normative realms. However, we will make two remarks: first, that observing a similarity of situation, with respect to the application of concepts such as power, does not clearly appear to be a normative process. Second, we can easily see how Connolly's consideration applies to all concepts, and is by no means peculiar to the concepts of political theory.

Regardless, Connolly maintains that efforts to restrict political inquiry to description, are "doomed to failure" (27). Certainly, we might concede that with explicitly normative political concepts (e.g. "justice"), efforts to purely "describe" would fail. However, it appears to be the case that the concept of power is not **wholeheartedly** normative, as other political concepts might be. In fact, it might be safe to say that there are (roughly) degrees of normativity in concepts. Concepts such as "justice" seem to contain a substantial normative element: the "just" individual, for instance, will be a "good" person.

Power, on the other hand, would seem to contain a lesser normative element, especially if its best explication does not link the power-holder with Connolly's idea of "responsibility" (28). The power-holder, it seems, does not necessarily have to be a "good" or a "bad" person in our conception of political power; normative considerations are (at least, possibly) lesser in the concept of power than they are in the concept of, say, justice.

Connolly ends his discussion of essential contestedness with a consideration of the role of ordinary language. Technical concepts, he claims, are only viable insofar as they modify the extant system:

> To understand the political life of a community one must understand the conceptual system in which that life moves; and therefore those concepts that help to shape the fabric of our political practices necessarily enter into any rational account of them. It may be justifiable for the investigator to introduce some technical concepts into the established conceptual world; but these will be useful only to the extent that they build upon and are understood in relation to the prevailing system.
>
> (29)

Once again, we will not take great issue with Connolly here. Our discussion of the concept of power, and our emergent characterization of power, will not proceed outside of our conceptual system. It does seem unlikely, however, that we could do such a thing; in an attempt to determine what power is, how could we conduct our

investigation outside of our conceptual system?

John Gray's article entitled "On the Contestability of Social and Political Concepts," published in Political Theory in 1977, contains further points-of-interest to our investigation. Gray undertakes an explication of the notion of an essentially contested concept, which includes an analysis of whether all of the chief concepts in social and political theory are contestable. His new understanding of essential contestability, clearly, goes beyond the normative limitations of Gallie and Connolly (i.e. the "affective" criterion):

> I try to sketch an understanding of essential contestability which avoids the difficulties of previous conceptions while preserving their explanatory power and philosophical interest. (30)

Gray's new characterization of an essentially contested concept takes Gallie as a starting point, and extends it to two important claims: that all essentially contested concepts require contextual understanding to be essentially contested at all, and that the other contextually related concepts are essentially contestable as well. He avers:

> It is one of the chief contentions of this paper that, taking Gallie's characterization as a departure point, an essentially contested concept is a concept such that any use of it in a social or political context presupposes a specific understanding of a whole range of other, contextually related concepts whose proper uses

> are no less disputed and which lock together so as to compose a single, identifiable conceptual framework....Any use of an essentially contested concept, then, involves assent to definite uses of a whole range of contextually related concepts of a no less contestable character.
>
> (31)

Gray's initial depiction of essential contestability, here, is very lucid. He avoids the normative criterion of both Gallie and Connolly, and argues that essentially contested concepts are so due to the interlocking conceptual frameworks in which they are found. Disputes about larger concepts, he claims, will involve reference to ancillary and contiguous concepts. Yet, Gray argues, these adjunct notions themselves are <u>also</u> contestable. Thus, it would seem to follow that essential contestabilty, according to Gray, is not a theoretical phenomenon peculiar to individual concepts; essential contestability, rather, relates to "conceptual frameworks," the contexts in which particular concepts can be found.

Stephen Lukes' account of the concept of power, Gray maintains, is a good illustration of the "central tension" (32) found in many theorists' notions of essential contestability. Lukes, he argues, acknowledges the "ineradicably evaluative and essentially contested character" (33) of his own conception of power. Gray also states that Lukes does not believe that the essential

contestability of power detracts from its empirical usefulness (34).

However, Gray doubts Lukes' commitment to the view that the concept of power is essentially contestable, and refers to Brian Barry's critique of Lukes' work (35). On the one hand, it would appear, the concept of power is seen by Lukes to be "ineradicably value-dependent" (36), which lends the concept to essential contestedness. On the other hand, as Barry points out, Lukes claims that the three-dimensional view of power is "rationally preferable" (37) to other conceptions of power [e.g. Dahl's and Bachrach & Baratz' (38)]. Barry and Gray seem to be quite correct, in their observation that the rational argumentation Lukes incorporates to discount other views, seems to preclude power as an essentially contested concept; reason, according to essential contestability, cannot arbitrate "conflicting moral and political commitments" (39). Gray does well to point out this incongruity in Lukes-- however, it is clear that the fault here is with Lukes' conception of essential contestability, and does not reflect on **all** essential contestability theses.

Gray proceeds to make two strong claims with respect to the nature of essentially contested concepts. To characterize a concept as essentially contestable, he

states,:

> (is) to repudiate a wide range of restrictive or exclusivist, descriptivist or essentialist claims which are characteristically made for it by each of its rival users.
>
> (40)

That is to say, the classification of a concept as essentially contestable necessitates the rejection of all definitive notions of the concept-in-question. Second, Gray writes:

> it follows from the first point that to characterize a concept as having an essentially contested character is to announce the result of a conceptual analysis which is not neutral about the logical status of the concept under investigation.
>
> (41)

Investigations, it is claimed, are (in view of the former point) often not neutral. In conceding essential contestability, an individual admits bias, and becomes "philosophically partisan" (42).

It would appear to be the case, that Gray is quite correct on these matters; the theses of essential contestability which have been brought forth, do indeed seem to logically result in both the rejection of definist conceptions, and the concession of investigative bias. However, there may be a good reason for this: the differing views of essential contestabiltiy which we have seen, all take the position that a concept is either essentially contested, or it is not. That is, no academics

appear to consider the possibility of **degrees of contestability**, under which differing concepts would be **more** or **less** contestable than their rivals (and, perhaps, more or less biased as well).

The strongest and most interesting variant of the essential contestability thesis, according to Gray, is one which:

> claim(s) that a concept is variable...(and) claim(s) that its subject matter is in its nature such that there are always good reasons for disputing the propriety of any of its uses.
>
> (43)

Gray's position denies the viability of deductions that "transcend all definitional disputes about the concept" (44). Instead, he maintains that characterizing a concept as essentially contestable is equivalent to offering "a philosophically partisan understanding of the nature of the dispute itself" (45).

Gray's essential contestability thesis, like some of Connolly's claims (e.g. Connolly's remarks about intents, purposes, and standards in description, and the application of concepts to new situations) is not without a serious problem: that essentially contested concepts are not (under his view) distinct from other concepts. Gray claims that a concept is essentially contestable, if there are "good reasons for disputing the propriety of any of

its uses" (46). However, we wonder, **which concepts are immune to dispute?** If no distinction between purportedly essentially contested concepts and concepts-in-general is to be found, then Gray's version of essential contestability appears to be, necessarily, universally applicable.

Aside from these considerations, Gray continues with a proposal regarding his essential contestability thesis: that it is amenable to the "traditional conception" (47) of the endeavours of the political theorist. The notion of essential contestability, he states, has three major insights: first, that there are concepts, with a common core of meaning, which have historically been problematic vis-à-vis their application. Second, that each use of, or dispute over, an essentially contested concept, presupposes many interlocking, ancillary ["satellite" (48)] concepts. Third, that contests between world-views are not reducible to disputes over language, logic, or empirical evidence alone: they all incorporate a theoretical ["metaphysical" (49)] element which is not self-evidently immune to criticism.

Gray ends his paper with an (admittedly) "weakening" (50) remark regarding his essential contestability thesis. He states that his account:

> makes no claim that definitional disputes about

> essentially contested concepts are inherently unsettlable by reason.
>
> (51)

Clearly, he does **substantially** weaken his case here. In claiming that reason could possibly settle disputes, and that the political theorist's "conjectural" conceptions "could be right" (52), Gray practically stultifies his case. He has argued that the best essential contestability thesis is one which incorporates the notion that there are "always good reasons for disputing the propriety" (53) of any use of the concept-in-question. If we accept this premise, how can we then justify the belief that a proposed conceptual solution "could be right" (54)?

Robert Grafstein's realist perspective on essential contestability appears to offer a good solution to Gray's imbroglio. Grafstein proposes that realism ["metaphysical realism," as he says, which "asserts the existence of a fixed (though not necessarily finite) set of mind-independent objects" (55)] is indeed quite compatible with conceptual diversity. That is, he believes that the theorist can recognize conceptual diversity, without having to sacrifice the "old-fashioned notion of truth" (56).

In "A Realist Foundation for Essentially Contested Political Concepts," Grafstein argues that it is the case that concepts of power are characterized within a certain

moral and political perspective. However, he states, one definition can still be preferable to another:

> Scholars may adopt different conceptual schemes and hence different definitions of power without...disagreeing at all about the proper basis for assessing a scheme...Despite conceptual diversity, for example, one could still conclude that one definition of power leads to more truths or more general truths.
>
> (57)

Grafstein is apparently in agreement with Gray here, with respect to the possibility of rational persuasion; however, Grafstein's position is much stronger than Gray's. As long as the standard of success is shared (i.e. as long as there is some agreement as to what a good conception of, for instance, power would be like), he states, superior schemes can be recognized for their true value. Christine Swanton, in her article "On the `Essential Contestedness' of Poltical Concepts," adds to this point:

> The theses of essential contestedness, as stated, are weaker...though there is no best conception, or none knowable to be the best, some conceptions may nonetheless be better than others.
>
> (58)

Swanton and Grafstein both maintain that some conceptions of power <u>are</u> better than others. And, as Swanton proposes, even though an individual may be precluded from knowing the "best" conception of an essentially contested concept, yet some conceptualizations may be superior to others.

Grafstein claims that a certain realist

conceptualization of "politics" provides the basis for a full-flowered essential contestability thesis. "Indeed," he writes,:

> it is the political character of certain concepts that makes them essentially contestable in the fuller sense. This political dimension transforms a relatively inert divergence between distinct definitions of concepts into an active contest among them. A realist conception of **politics** completes the foundation for essential contestability.
>
> (59)

The political character of the concepts themselves, Grafstein avers, lends them to "active contest(s)." Moreover, Grafstein claims that the "uncertainty of political outcomes" (60) in the consideration of differing conceptions of (say) freedom, truly promotes their essential contestability.

Must we necessarily, and in all cases, admit to being "philosophically partisan" (61) in accepting the viability of the essential contestability thesis? Certainly, Gray is correct in arguing that at least **some** (if not most) conceptual analyses are not value-neutral. However, in terms of the concept of political power, it is not at all clear that normative elements are present to any significant degree. In fact, it would appear as though the concept of power can be described in a decidedly non-valuational fashion.

Further, in the consideration of the essential

contestability thesis, we see that (in light of the value-neutrality of the concept of power) the affective criterion of Gallie, Connolly, and (partially) Gray, is eschewed. Since power is not normatively charged, the criteria for essential contestability can not be fulfilled in their terms; yet, there are still good grounds for accepting the essential contestability thesis, **which are found outside of the normative realm**. Connolly and Gray, for instance, in their reference to (respectively) cluster concepts and conceptual context, provide an excellent basis for the essential contestability thesis. Essential contestability, also, has been wrongly subjected to a simplistic "black and white" world; there has not been enough discussion of the notion of **degrees of contestability**. At least some essentially contested concepts can be described and explicated such that the differing conceptions of the concept-in-question clearly admit to greater and lesser contestability. That is to say, in some cases, it makes sense to talk of <u>less contestable</u> characterizations of a purported essentially contested concept.

Let us discuss, first-of-all, the question of normative content in the concept of power. As we have seen, Connolly is in agreement with Gallie, to the extent that he accepts that an "affective criterion" (62) must be met,

if any socio-political concept is to be regarded as essentially contestable. That is, these academics believe that a concept must be "appraisive" (63), if it is to be essentially contestable. Undoubtedly, many conceptions of power are valuationally charged: for instance, we can easily conceive of some common (and, rather trite) characterizations of power, in which those who have power are always "evil." However, the fact that power **can** be construed (perhaps, misconstrued) in a way which incorporates inextricable normative elements, does not mean that normative elements are **always** involved in characterizations of power.

Both Gallie and Connolly (64) admit that some concepts in political theory are not normative. Connolly, as we have seen, claims that power is essentially contestable due to the fact that it is related to the notion of responsibility (65). However, our conception of power will show how power is actually not related to personal responsibilty; that power operates apart from both personal intentions, and interests. Thus, it does not really make sense to talk of the responsibility of the power-holder, since the exercise of power can often work **against** the intentions and interests of the power-holder, and one could hardly hold another responsible for an outcome which was neither intended by them, nor in their

interest (subjectivist or objectivist, as we will see in Ch. 3).

Gallie, Gray, Connolly, and Grafstein all admit that some concepts in social and political theory are not essentially contestable; however, none of them gives an example of such notions. Nor, unfortunately, do any of them give any real indication of what such concepts involve. Let us agree with these theorists, insofar as the idea of non-contestable concepts is concerned. What would such concepts look like? What, we ask, would be the characteristics of non-normative concepts?

First, and importantly, we must distinguish between **explicit** and **implicit** normativity. In our cogitation, we are inquiring into the nature of power, and we are pursuing a route which many other political theorists have followed: we seek a schematic charaterization of power [e.g. Russell's idea that power is "the production of intended effects" (66)]. Evidently, our schema will be pithily put in propositional form, so it makes sense to discuss the **explicit** value-content of the schema. A schema which incorporates value-charged terms such as: "good," "best," "ought," "should," etc., can be said to be **explicitly normative**. Explicit normativity, then, is the normative content found in the terms of the schema itself.

Implicit normativity, on the other hand, is the value-content <u>implied</u> by the schema, by the theorist's "world view." This type of normative content can be revealed through an examination of the theorist's other works, or articulated beliefs, which give the theoretical context for the schema itself. For instance, if we were to consider the following schematic characterization of freedom:

[1] Freedom is the absence of external restraints

we would likely come to the conclusion that there are no explicitly normative terms in the schema. However, if we were to later find out that the theorist-in-question saw <u>all</u> external restraints as "bad" or "oppressive," we would probably say that there is a definite valuational content **implied** by the schema. For, to properly understand the complex nature of such a schema, we would have to have a grip on what the theorist meant by "external restraints," and we would be thoroughly ignorant of such a consideration if we merely examined the schema itself.

Thus, a schematic conceptualization can have roughly two sorts of normative content, explicit and implicit, which can be (respectively): found openly in the propositional content of the schema, or revealed through an examination of the theoretical context surrounding it.

Our characterization of political power will largely avoid both sorts of normativity. The terms which we will incorporate, in our schema, will be quite innocuous vis-a-vis value content; we will involve such terms as: "cause," "believe," "perform," "action," and "concept"-- terms which seem to be valuationally inert. Further, regarding the question of implicit normative content, we will make our position known: we do not see those who have power as being "better" or "worse," or even (in Connolly's sense) "responsible" (67) for their exercises of power. When we explicate our schema, to give an adequate context to the proposition, we will show how power itself is at best contingently related to normative concerns of individual interest, goodness, purposes, etc..

We will also make a conscious attempt, for what it is worth, to eschew the incorporation of value as much as is possible. Granted, there may be some relatively minor normative "standards" (68) involved in our conceptual discussion, such as (as we have said) the standard of **clarity** inherent in the concept of power. However, such concerns are not merely peculiar to the concepts of political theory; the standard of clarity is universally virtuous to <u>all</u> concepts. For example, even in the concept of "bachelor," clarity is a theoretical virtue; such a standard, evidently, seems to be quite trivial in the face

of such actual normative concerns as are found in the political concept of, say, "justice." Granted, there will be some small level of normativity in our explication of political power, but there will be **no more value-content than there is in any other concept.** If this is the case, it would thus appear that to argue that power is ineradicably normatively charged, is to claim that all concepts are normatively charged, and to trivialize the important essence of normative political concepts such as obligation, or justice.

We do not, evidently, wish to propose a "valuationally neutral system of definitions" for political theory, as does Oppenheim (69); we agree that some concepts do seem to be normatively based. However, the concept of political power is not one of them-- the most cogent, concise, and forthcoming conception of power does not involve significant valuational elements.

If we agree that the concept of power -- as we will explicate it -- does not have significant normative content, then it might appear **prima facie** that the concept of power is not essentially contestable. That is to say, if the "normative criterion" (70) of Gallie and Connolly is found to be lacking, then power can not be an essentially contestable concept. However, there is a foundation for essential contestability, which is not

rooted only in normative concepts. In considering Connolly's and Gray's arguments regarding (respectively) cluster concepts and contextual concerns, we realize that the essential contestability thesis can be grounded not **only** in normative concepts, but in **complex** (and non-normative) **concepts as well.**

A complex concept (as we shall call it), is one like those described by Connolly and Gray. Complex concepts, as we have seen, are characterized as having a network-like essence: they are contextualized such that their discussion requires reference to ancillary and contiguous concepts. Contests can arise [as Connolly argues (71)] over the question of **which** or **how many** characteristic elements of a complex concept must be present, for something to qualify as, say, "political" (72). And, contests can arise over ancillary notions in the complex concept if, for instance, the contester does not agree with the purported meaning of the ancillary sub-concept. (Or, evidently, if the sub-concept is decidedly normative). Clearly, the essential contestability thesis does not require a normative criterion (though the presence of normative elements may always lead to contestability): complex, non-normative concepts can qualify as essentially contestable, **if they have several generally vague characteristic elements,** with which people

can disagree, **or if they involve ancillary notions, which are themselves questionable.**

What are we to make of this new basis for essential contestability? It would appear to be very strong, in terms of the concept of power: since power is indeed a complex concept, with many ancillary notions (e.g. action, performance, influence, control, etc.), power will be essentially contestable. We will agree with this notion: **power is an essentially contestable concept**, not because of valuational content, but **because of its inherent complexity**. Although the sub-concepts of power may not be remarkably normative or contestable, the inherent vagueness in the concept, in terms of (say) demarcating exactly what qualifies as an exercise of power (in view of the question of what are its necessary and sufficient characteristics), seems to reveal its essentially contestable essence. Power is essentially contestable due to the vague nature of its multifarious constitutive characteristics, which are primarily found in the discourse of ancillary and satellite concepts in and around the concept.

In agreeing that the concept of power is essentially contestable, do we find ourselves necessarily locked into a position which can not discern between quite compelling descriptions of power and glaringly crazy conceptions? The

answer, charily, is no. The essential contestability theses of Gallie, Connolly, Gray, and Grafstein have all conceived of concepts as being simply contestable, or not contestable. However, there appear to be good reasons to accept the notion of **degrees of contestability**, so that we can safely say that, although the concept of political power is (ultimately) essentially contestable, yet **one conception of what power is can still be preferable to another.**

Grafstein, it would appear, is in agreement with us with respect to the notion that "one concept (can be) preferable to another" (73), as is Gray, who maintains, perhaps **a fortiori**, that conceptual disputes are potentially "settlable by reason" (74). However, the question of justifying our notion of degrees of contestability remains. How is it that different characterizations of power can be more or less contestable than others?

The notion of <u>degree</u>, in contestability, finds justification from several sources. First, there is a definite intuitive tendency (one would imagine) to regard certain conceptual characterizations as superior to others. Consider the following two conceptions of power:

[3] Power is $\sqrt{2}$ prefers ice cream

[4] Power is the ability to produce intended

effects

(75)

It would appear as though, in considering these two characterizations of power, the first would be more contestable than the second. That is, our intuitions would likely lead us away from the first conception, as it makes practically no sense. On the intuitive level, clearly, we would say that the second (Russell's) conception of power is more cogent and thereby less contestable.

Unfortunately for us, our intuitions are often dead wrong. Still, there are yet other convincing arguments which show how the contestability of political concepts varies by degree. Let us consider the following three inter-related schematic concerns: coherence, contradiction, and comprehensibility.

If a schema is **incoherent**, that is, if it lacks in internal unity or logical connectedness, we can say that it is inadequate. A characterization of power which has a perspicuous lack of coherence, will obviously be precluded from versimilitude: any theorist will be at a loss to decipher it. An incoherent schema will thus be more contestable than a coherent one (assuming that all other features are identical).

Contradiction in conceptions of power (or, evidently,

any other essentially contestable concept), also shows the viability of the notion of degrees of contestability. If a schema, for instance, is self-contradictory, it is clearly more contestable than a schema devoid of self-contradiction. Let us exemplify, with Simon's schema:

> [5] A has power over B means that A's behavior causes B's behavior.
>
> (76)

Evidently, Simon does not propose a self-contradictory conception. Yet, as a foil, we could say:

> [6] A has power over B means that A's behavior causes B's behavior, **but A's behavior can not cause B's behavior.**

We notice here how Simon's characterization [5] is clearly less contestable than our bastardization [6]. Simon's schema lacks internal contradiction, whereas the latter part of [6] stultifies the whole schema. In considering the self-contradictory nature of [6], we see that it is more contestable than [5], since [6] explicitly denies that which it asserts can qualify as power, and is thereby **thoroughly** contestable. Simon's schema, at least, is not precluded from success in such a way: Simon, as Gray states, has the assurance that he "could be right" (77).

Finally, if a schema is **incomprehensible**, it will be more contestable than another which is comprehensible. This point, it would seem, is almost trivially true: schemas which are rife with solecisms, garbled sentences,

etc., will be more contestable than others which make sense to theorists. A well-stated schema will lend itself to testability and theoretical considerations, and will likely prove to have some redeeming factors. In contrast, a garbled, incomprehensible goulash of symbols will have no theoretical strong points whatsoever.

Coherence, contradiction, and comprehensibility are all considerations with respect to schematic characterizations of essentially contested concepts. A schema which is coherent, lacks contradiction, and is quite comprehensible, will be **less contestable** than one which is self-contradictory, or incoherent, or incomprehensible. Coherent, comprehensible schemata will have certain strong points, perhaps reflected in (for example) better experimental adequacy, or greater explanatory power. Incoherent, self-contradictory schemata, on the other hand, will have no redeeming factors whatsoever: they are precluded from any strong points by their very nature.

Thus, it would seem as though the essential contestability thesis does admit to the notion of degrees of contestability. Granted, there are no strict quantitative increments to be found, but, as we have seen, some schemas can still be more or less contestable than others. With this in mind, it is evident that the task of the political theorist (who engages in conceptual

investigations), is to attempt to delineate a schematic characterization of the concept-in-question, which is **less contestable than the rest** (as per the intuitions of Grafstein and Swanton). This, then, is what we shall do.

We have argued that all concepts, political or otherwise, are contestable in some sense; there always seem to be at least semi-cogent reasons for disputing them. However, it is also apparent that such contestability is like global skepticism-- hard to completely do away with, yet difficult to take seriously. Moreover, one would clearly trivialize the important essence of certain political concepts, if one were to seriously say that the concept of "authority," is as contestable as the concept of "bachelor" or "table."

Essential contestability, clearly, pertains to certain social and political concepts, is rooted in their normative or complex nature, and admits of degrees. It may be well be the case that decidedly normative concepts, such as, for instance, the concept of justice, do not admit of degrees of contestability. That is, characterizations of **normative** essentially contested concepts might well be equally contestable amongst each other, due to the potential impossibility involved in attempting to judge evaluative positions. However, our investigation into the concept of power, while affirming

its essential contestability, **denies** that there are significant evaluative elements to be found. Let us, therefore, attempt an explication of the concept of political power which is coherent, comprehensible, cogent, and less contestable than the rest.

ENDNOTES to CHAPTER TWO:

1) Gallie, p. 171, Connolly (1974), p. 22, and Grafstein, p. 24.
2) Grafstein, pp. 15-16.
3) Gallie, p. 168.
4) Gallie, p. 169.
5) Gallie, p. 171.
6) **ibid.**
7) Gallie, pp. 170-71.
8) Gallie, p. 183.
9) Gallie, p. 184.
10) Gallie, p. 171.
11) Connolly (1974), p. 14.
12) **ibid.**
13) Connolly (1974), p. 13.
14) Connolly (1974), p. 14.
15) Connolly (1974), p. 15.
16) Connolly (1974), pp. 14-15.
17) Connolly (1974), pp. 22-23.
18) Connolly (1974), p. 23.
19) Connolly (1974), p. 27.
20) Connolly (1974), p. 23.
21) Connolly (1974), p. 98.
22) Connolly (1974), p. 99.
23) Connolly (1974), p. 32.
24) Connolly (1974), p. 32.
25) Connolly (1974), pp. 37-38.
26) Connolly (1974), p. 34.
27) Connolly (1974), p. 35.
28) Connolly (1974), pp. 97-98.
29) Connolly (1974), p. 39.
30) Gray (1977), p. 331.
31) Gray (1977), p. 332.
32) Gray (1977), p. 333.
33) **ibid.**
34) **ibid.**
35) Barry's criticism of Lukes takes the form of a book review called "The Obscurities of Power", Government and Opposition, 10 (1975) pp. 250-54.
36) Gray (1977), p. 333.
37) **ibid.**
38) Dahl's "Concept of Power", Behavioral Science, 2 (1957) pp.201-5, and Bachrach & Baratz' "The Two Faces of Power", American Political Science Review, 56 (1962) pp.947-52.
39) Gray (1977), p. 334.
40) Gray (1977), p. 336.
41) **ibid.**
42) **ibid.**

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO (Contd.):

43) Gray (1977), p. 338.
44) Gray (1977), p. 339.
45) **ibid.**
46) **ibid.**
47) Gray (1977), p. 344.
48) **ibid.**
49) **ibid.**
50) Gray (1977), p. 346.
51) **ibid.**
52) Gray (1977), pp. 346-47.
53) Gray (1977), p. 338.
54) Gray (1977), p. 347.
55) Grafstein, p. 12.
56) Grafstein, p. 16.
57) Grafstein, p. 18.
58) Swanton, p. 815.
59) Grafstein, p. 19.
60) Grafstein, p. 24.
61) Gray (1977), p. 336.
62) Connolly (1974), pp. 22-23.
63) Gallie, p. 171, and Connolly (1974), pp. 22-23.
64) Gallie, p. 171, and Connolly (1974), p. 27.
65) Connolly (1974), p. 98.
66) Russell, p. 35.
67) Connolly (1974), p. 98.
68) Connolly (1974), pp. 22-23.
69) Oppenheim (1961), p. 8.
70) Gallie, p. 171 and Connolly (1974), pp. 22-23.
71) Connolly (1974), p. 14.
72) **ibid.**
73) Grafstein, p. 18.
74) Gray (1977), p. 347.
75) [4] is from Russell, p. 35.. [3] is our own construct.
76) Oppenheim (1980), p. 32.
77) Gray (1977), p. 347.

CHAPTER THREE: MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF POWER - THE INTERESTS OF "B"

Having examined several historical characterizations of the concept of power, and having assayed the essential contestability thesis, we will now move to an analysis of modern conceptions of power. Modern conceptions, for the most part, are cast in schematic form: "**A**" in some relation to "**B**", where either variable usually represents an individual or a group. Russell's notion of power (as we have seen) is one which incorporates such variables, and is truly a precursor of the modern approach.

In 1957, Dahl kicked off the modern era with his lauded article "The Concept of Power," published in Behavioral Science (1). "Power," he avers, "is something like this":

> **A** has power over **B** to the extent that he can get **B** to do something he would not otherwise do."
>
> (2)

Dahl clarifies his schematic conception, arguing that **actual and observable conflict** is a criterion for his characterization of power:

> (identifying) who prevails in decision-making... (seems to be) the best way to determine which individuals and groups have "more power" in social life, because direct conflict between actors presents a situation most closely approximating an experimental test of their capacities to affect outcomes.
>
> (3)

In "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," Dahl furthers his case. The hypothetical notion of a "ruling class," he

argues, can only be maintained if:

> (there are) cases involving key political decisions in which the preferences of the hypothetical ruling elite run counter to those of any other likely group that might be suggested... (and) in such cases the preferences of the elite regularly prevail.
>
> (4)

The focus of Dahl's schematic conception of power (as Lukes points out), is "behavior in the making of decisions" (5) with reference to actual political issues. In a power relationship, according to Dahl, there is an observable conflict of interests, manifested in policy preference through standard political participation (e.g. voting).

Dahl's conception of power does not receive Lukes' approbation, as Lukes recognizes its "one-dimensional" (6) character. "In brief," he writes:

> the one-dimensional view of power cannot reveal the less visible ways in which a pluralist system may be biased in favor of certain groups and against others.
>
> (7)

Lukes' criticism of Dahl's concept of power proves to be quite acute. "Individuals and elites," Lukes states,:

> may act separately in making acceptable decisions, but they may act in concert - or even fail to act at all - in such a way as to keep unacceptable issues out of politics, thereby preventing the system from becoming any more diverse than it is.
>
> (8)

That is, in terms of **A** and **B**, **A** may act in a certain

fashion, so as to prevent issues from coming forth; thus, **B** would have no forum in which to raise his concerns. Such acts of prevention, on **A**'s part, do indeed seem to be examples of exercises of power. Clearly, Dahl's focus on behavior (with respect to concrete decisions & issues) lacks in conspicuous ways. There is, it appears, no way for Dahl's one-dimensional concept of power to adequately account for either covert conflict, or the suppression of potential issues in the political realm.

Although these criticisms of Dahl's conception of power are fatal, there is yet another objection which could be raised, concerning the schema in particular. Dahl maintains that "**A** has power over **B** if **A** can get **B** to do something he would not otherwise do" (9). A question emerges: if **B** were in a situation where **A** had got him to "do something," yet **A**'s presence was <u>not</u> <u>required</u>, with respect to **B**'s ultimate performance of the action-in-question, would **A** have exercised power?

Imagine the following scenario. A jailer responsible for a political prisoner, waits in a hallway outside of some government boardrooms. He knows that certain high-ranking officials are discussing the question of whether to let the prisoner go. Suddenly, the doors to one of the rooms burst open, an individual marches out, and he tells the jailer to let the prisoner go. The jailer hurries back

to the jail, and does so. In this example, evidently, power was exercised. And, Dahl's schema can deal with such an exercise of power: the jailer (B) did something he would not otherwise have done.

A slight twist to the story, however, is all that is required to show the inadequacy of Dahl's conception of power. Consider the same scenario, with one minor alteration. The jailer waits outside of the government boardrooms, for a decision regarding whether to let the prisoner out. However, this time <u>two</u> sessions are being held, each in a different boardroom. If the officials in <u>either</u> meeting decide that the prisoner should go free, he will go free. The officials in the first boardroom decide that the prisoner should be freed, 15 seconds before the V.I.P.'s from the second boardroom come to the same conclusion. An official bursts out of the first boardroom, and tells the jailer to free the prisoner, just as an official from the second boardroom explodes into the hallway, intending to tell the jailer exactly the same thing. The jailer hurries off, and frees the prisoner.

In this example, just as in the former scenario, it is clear that power was exercised. However, in this second example, the official from the first boardroom (A) got the jailer (B) to do **something that he <u>would</u> have otherwise done**. That is, if the first official had not come out of

the boardroom, or if the officials he represented had come to a different decision, or no decision, or if they never even existed, **the jailer would still have freed the prisoner by the order of the official from the second boardroom**. In this second scenario, **A** has power over **B**, and **A** exercises that power; yet, **B** does something that he would have otherwise done.

Clearly, Dahl's schematic conception of power is too narrow in scope: it does not account for the effects of exercises of power which would, in some cases, have otherwise been done. This consideration, along with Lukes' insightful criticism, evinces the problematic nature of Dahl's schema.

Peter Bachrach & Morton Baratz have attempted to cope with Dahl's conceptual shortcomings, by proposing a more comprehensive conception of power. In their 1962 article "Two Faces of Power," published in the American Political Science Review, Bachrach & Baratz argue that power can bring about a situation in which there may be "little or no behaviorally admissible evidence of power being exercised" (10). Yet, they claim, in such situations power is still present. Bachrach & Baratz propose that a satisfactory analysis of the two faces of power, requires an examination of **both** "decision-making and nondecision-making" (11). Nondecision-making, according to them, is a

relatively common phenomenon in which:

> an **A** devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues that are comparatively innocuous to **A**.
>
> (12)

That is, **A** is concerned (consciously or unconsciously) with the institutionalization of limited options regarding **B**, who is a rival for power. In this way, evidently, **B** finds difficulty in simply raising issues which could be contrary to **A**'s preferences.

Bachrach & Baratz illustrate this second face of power, with a story of a professor who opposes a faculty issue. In this scenario, the professor decides to speak out at the next faculty meeting; but when the meeting finally takes place, he remains silent (13). Bachrach & Baratz offer three reasons by which this could take place: the professor might fear being regarded as disloyal to the faculty, he might realize that his particular opinion is not shared by any of his colleagues, or he might believe that his proposals would simply never be implemented (14).

This notion of conflict at the level of raising issues, of which Bachrach & Baratz are so fond, is originally found in Schattschneider's work. In "The Two Faces of Power," Bachrach & Baratz cite his heralded lines:

> All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because **organization is the mobilisation of bias.** Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out.
>
> (14)

Bachrach & Baratz call Schattschneider's notion of the "organizing out" of issues, the "nondecision-making process." This process, clearly, is intimately tied to the notion of "the mobilisation of bias"; a notion which they explicate thus:

> [It is] a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain groups, and at the expense of others.
>
> (16)

We notice here, how the notion of the "expense of others" is incorporated by Bachrach & Baratz. This idea, it would seem, is crucial to their conception of nondecision-making in power:

> (a nondecision is) a decision that results in the suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker...a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decicion-making arena; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process.
>
> (17)

As Lukes points out, Bachrach & Baratz differ with Dahl with respect to the question of decision- and nondecision-

making; yet they are still similar in a way: they both stress the requirement of "actual, observable conflict, overt or covert" (18). Like Dahl, Bachrach & Baratz explicitly claim that, if conflict is absent,:

> the presumption must be that there is no consensus on the prevailing allocation of values, in which case nondecision-making is impossible. (19)

That is to say, Bachrach & Baratz' conception of power involves the notion of observable conflict, "seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances" (20), as a necessary criterion.

Understanding Bachrach & Baratz' position, let us cite the passage in their work which best summarizes their conception of power in a schematic form:

> Of course power is exercised when **A** participates in the making of decisions that affect **B**. Power is also exercised when **A** devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to **A**. To the extent that **A** succeeds in doing this, **B** is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to **A**'s set of preferences... to the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power. (21)

Lukes' criticism of Bachrach & Baratz is very concise, and elucidates the problematic elements of their

conceptualization of power. Dahl's conception of power, as we have seen, appears to have what Lukes calls a "one-dimensional" (22) character; Bachrach & Baratz' notion, Lukes argues, is "two-dimensional" (i.e. more comprehensive, but still inadequate).

The problem with Bachrach & Baratz' characterization of power, Lukes states, is that:

> it confines itself to studying situations where the mobilisation of bias can be attributed to individuals' decisions that have the effect of preventing currently observable grievances (overt or covert) from becoming issues within the political process.
>
> (23)

That is, Bachrach & Baratz' conception of power leads to "superficial" (24) analyses; the "mobilisation of bias," according to them, is only to be considered in the context of actual decisions (or nondecisions) concerning the prevention of political grievances from rearing their heads in the political theatre.

In a careful consideration of Bacrach & Baratz' investigation of poverty, race, and politics in Baltimore (25), Lukes finds their study to be shallowly inadequate. "A deeper analysis," Lukes maintains,:

> would also concern itself with all the complex and subtle ways in which the **inactivity** of leaders and the sheer weight of institutions-political, industrial, and educational - served for so long to keep the blacks out of Baltimore politics; and indeed for a long time kept them

> from even trying to get into it.
>
> (26)

Clearly, Lukes has a point: the political inactivity of individuals is definitely salient to a comprehensive conception of power. Although observable conflict (in, for instance, the form of decisions & nondecisions) is an important element of political power, it would appear to be the case that (as Lukes argues) such things as decisions, policy preferences, and observable conflict do not **fully comprise** power.

There is, however, another essential element of Bachrach & Baratz' characterization of power which betrays a fundamental shortcoming of their overall notion. As we have seen, Bachrach & Baratz' conception involves Schattschneider's idea of the "mobilisation of bias," which:

> operate(s) systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups and at the expense of others.
>
> (29)

We have also seen that, in explicating their conception of power, Bachrach & Baratz claim that:

> to the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power.
>
> (30)

Bachrach & Baratz, in simply proposing that "<u>barriers</u>" are essential to the nature of power, and that power

consistently operates "to the expense of others," clearly show the lack of purview inherent in their notion of power. That is to say, power does **not** always operate in such a way (i.e. against the interests of B); often times, **power is exercised in a fashion which is beneficial to B.**

Before we exemplify this fundamentally problematic element of Bachrach & Baratz' conception of power, let us consider Lukes' and Connolly's characterizations of the concept. Lukes, as we have seen, provides astute observations regarding the conceptual shortcomings of both Dahl's and Bachrach & Baratz' work. Yet, in Power: A Radical View, his emergent conceptualization of power also proves to be too narrow.

Lukes' conception of power is schematically stated as follows:

> **A** exercises power over **B** when **A** affects **B** in a manner contrary to **B**'s interests. (31)

Interests, that is, **real** interests, are seen by Lukes to be clearly distinct from preferences (i,e, an individual's purported interests). The preferences of a person, he argues, "may be the product of a system that works against their interests" (32); thus, **real** interests are (as Connolly also claims) actually related to what the person **would** want, if they "were able to make the choice" (33) between the outcomes of different policies. Lukes' notion

of power, then, conceives of "interests" not as socially-produced preferences, but as choices which would be made, were it possible for the individual(s)-in-question to choose between the results of different options.

Connolly's discussion of the concept of power in The Terms of Political Discourse, yields a characterization not unlike Lukes'. Like Lukes, Connolly argues that exercises of power only take place when **A** constrains **B**'s real interests. He writes:

> **A** exercises power over **B** when he is responsible for some x that increases the costs, risks, or difficulties to **B** in promoting **B**'s desires or in recognising or promoting **B**'s interests or obligations. **A** has power as **potential**, then, when he could but does not limit **B** in the ways specified; **A exercises** that power when the constraint x is so introduced or maintained. (34)

Connolly takes essentially the same position as Lukes, with respect to the question of the distinction (or lack thereof) between "preferences" and "interests." However, Connolly's position has a facet of further interest: he argues that persuasion is not a form of power (35).

Connolly maintains that such notions as "persuasion, manipulation, (and) coercion" (36) involve to some extent the ancillary idea of choice:

> Each notion presupposes that the agents involved have a capacity for choice; and in those cases where the predicate 'power' is applicable, either the recipient's capacity for choice or his ability to act how he chooses has somehow been impaired.

> To persuade another...is to give him reasons that help to inform his choice. Neither his capacity for choice nor his ability to act on his choice has been impaired by persuasion.
>
> (37)

Connolly's claim, it appears, is that persuasion is not a species of power, since persuasion does not restrict or constrain the capacity for choice, whereas such things as manipulation, coercion, deterrence, etc.. do affect an individual's ability to choose.

Although Connolly's conception of power proves to lack in another way (specifically, in the requirement that power be exercised **always against** B's real interests), we still take issue with his distinction here between persuasion and manipulation. Does persuasion consist in giving reasons that help choice, while not impairing the ability to act?

It could easily be argued that the whole idea and intent of persuasion, is to give cogent arguments so as to **change the beliefs of another**-- even if it is just to the extent that they have "more information" and are "better informed." During a conversation, for instance, let us say that **A** persuades **B** (in Connolly's sense), giving him some helpful information about a presidential candidate. Here, **A** provides cogent, logically sound arguments concerning the candidate, which **B** absorbs. Does **B** have any <u>choice</u> in this matter? Connolly wants to distinguish between

persuasion and manipulation on the grounds that persuasion does not restrict B's ability to choose. It is clear, however, that B was somewhat different before A came along (i.e. B had different beliefs), and it is at least questionable as to whether B had any choice regarding the acceptance of A's logically coercive information. Moreover, it seems evident that the intent of persuasion involves at least some amount of belief, on A's part, that B lacks in some respect, and should have more information.

Nevertheless, the distinction between persuasion and manipulation might still be maintained by some; we may not have provided logically coercive reasons to show that the distinction is actually a chimerical one. Thus, we will show how Connolly's characterization of power lacks, even if his distinction between persuasion and manipulation holds.

Bachrach & Baratz, Lukes, and Connolly all propose conceptions of power which are too narrow in scope. These theorists [as do several others (38)] all argue that power is exercised only if A affects B, in a fashion which is detrimental to B's real interests. However, as De Crespigny suggests, power is not just exercised in situations of conflict "where there is a collision of interests and one actor 'overpowers' another" (39). Gray, too, is candid on this matter-- in "Political Power,

Social Theory, and Essential Contestability," he states:

> I cannot see why the attribute of power should be restricted to social interactions where one agent affects **detrimentally** the interests of another. No such restriction is found in ordinary thought and language, and imposing one by stipulation has counter-intuitive results.
>
> (40)

There are theorists (such as Barry, in his work Political Argument), clearly, who argue that the notion of interests consists entirely in want-satisfaction (41), rather than in the **a posteriori** choice between a number of possible options. That is, Connolly and Lukes do not make their objectivist argument with respect to interests, without meeting disagreement from such subjectivists as Barry. Nevertheless, we can easily imagine a possible situation, in which an individual's subjective desires are co-linear with his (in Lukes' and Connolly's view) objective interests. With this in mind, let us construct another scenario, which evinces the narrow essence of conceptions of power based in the frustration of B's interests.

Consider the following situation: a worker toils away busily in a state factory. It is election day, and he is considering which candidate he should vote for. The worker knows that two of the three parties vying for office are dedicated to the dissolution of his job, and, more frighteningly, the execution of him and his co-workers.

The other party's platform is much more moderate: it maintains that both the jobs and lives of the country's working-class are obviously important.

Our worker wants to go out to the polling station to vote; yet, he knows that he can't simply leave his post. Unfortunately, it is rather late in the day, and the polling stations are about to close-- it appears as though our worker has procrastinated to the extent that he will not be able to vote at all.

Suddenly, the factory manager stops production to ask whether any of the workers have not yet voted. It happens to be the case, that our worker is the only person who has not. The factory manager tells our worker to head over to the polling station immediately, **and also tells him to vote for the moderate party**. Our worker leaves his post, and hurries off to vote.

Twenty minutes later, the worker returns: he has voted for the moderate party. Ultimately, the moderate party wins by a small margin, and the life, job, and general well-being of our worker is secured.

In this situation, we cognize a salient exercise of power by the factory manager: the worker followed the manager's orders, doing something (as Dahl would say) that he would not have otherwise done (i.e. heading off to vote

during worktime, and voting for the moderate party). Yet, this exercise of power **was not against the interests of B** (the worker). As we have seen, Lukes and Connolly maintain that a person's real interests consist in what policy they would choose, if they were able to experience the results of each option. In this scenario, the manager clearly does **not** exercise power against the worker's real interests, since the result of voting for the more moderate party enhances the worker's life, whereas the result of voting for either of the other parties (or not voting at all), would result in the worker's death. Power, in this instance, is exercised by the manager in the worker's interests: the worker, were he able to choose between his options, would, in retrospect, have voted for the more moderate party (as opposed to not voting and perhaps causing the moderate party to lose, or voting for one of the other parties).

It also becomes apparent that whether we conceive of "interests" as do Connolly and Lukes, or if we maintain that interests are instead co-extensive with preferences, makes no real difference. In our scenario, we suppose that the worker **also desires** or **prefers** to vote for the moderate party while he is at his post. That is, the sort of conception of "interests" we adopt will not affect the apparent fact that power can be exercised in B's

interests.

It is further evident that we avoid Connolly's distinction between persuasion and manipulation in this scenario. The worker is not "persuaded" here; rather, he is **ordered** to vote for the moderate party by his manager. Granting Connolly's distinction (for the sake of argument), **it is still clear that power can be exercised in the interests of B.**

Thus, it would appear as though any conception of power, which maintains that power can only be exercised <u>against</u> the interests of **B**, is too narrow in focus. This is not to say that power is **always** exercised in **B**'s interests; Connolly and Lukes are obviously correct to the extent that power is <u>sometimes</u> (perhaps often) exercised against the interests of **B**. Our investigation of power, then, has led us to a chary first conclusion: that power can be exercised both <u>in</u> and <u>against</u> the interests of **B**. And, **a fortiori**, we could say that any conception of power which maintains that exercises of power are always against (or always in) **B**'s interests, is a conceptualization which lacks in purview.

ENDNOTES to CHAPTER THREE:

1) Dahl's "The Concept of Power" in Behavioral Science, Vol. 2 (1957), p. 204.
2) Lukes (1974), p. 12.
3) Lukes (1974), p. 13.
4) "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model", American Political Science Review, Vol. 52 (1958), p. 466.
5) Lukes (1974), p. 25.
6) Lukes (1974), p. 36.
7) **ibid.**
8) see (1).
9) Clegg (1989), p. 77.
10) Also explicated in "Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework", American Political Science Review, Vol. 57 (1963), pp. 641-51.
11) Bachrach & Baratz (1962), p. 949.
12) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), p. 8.
13) Bachrach & Baratz (1962), p. 949.
14) Clegg (1989), p. 76.
15) Schattschneider (1960), p. 71.
16) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), pp. 43-44.
17) **ibid.**
18) Lukes (1974), p. 19.
19) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), p. 49.
20) Lukes (1974), p. 20.
21) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), pp. 77-78.
22) Lukes (1974), p. 11.
23) Lukes (1974), p. 37.
24) **ibid.**
25) **ibid.**
26) Lukes (1974), p. 38.
27) Lukes (1974), p. 24.
28) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), pp. 43-44.
29) **ibid.**
30) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), p. 8.
31) Lukes (1974), p. 34.
32) **ibid.**
33) **ibid.**
34) Connolly (1974), pp. 102-03.
35) Connolly (1974), pp. 93-94.
36) Connolly (1974), p. 94.
37) Connolly (1974), pp. 93-94.
38) Notably, St. Augustine [see Franz L. Neumann's (1950) **"Approaches to the Study of Poltical Power"**], and Lord Acton (see his History of Freedom and Other Essays).
39) De Crespigny (1968), p. 193.
40) Miller & Siedentop, p. 80.
41) Barry (1965), Ch. X.

CHAPTER FOUR: POWER AND THE INTENTIONS & INTERESTS OF "A"

Russell, as we have seen, can certainly be called a precursor to more modern conceptions of power. His was the first notably schematic and intention-oriented characterization of power, which has served as the basis for several contemporary theorists' views (1). However, under close examination, it appears to be the case that power is not necessarily tied to **A**'s [the powerholder(s)] intentions. Further, it also becomes quite clear that power operates in a realm outside of **A**'s foreseen effects, deliberation, preferences, and so-called "real" interests as well. Granted, these claims (especially when juxtaposed alongside those of the former chapter) sound utterly counter-intuitive; to seriously argue that power works separately from the intentions, deliberations, preferences, foreseen effects, and interests of **A**, seems to be crazy. Intuitions, unfortunately, are often wrong. Let us investigate the nature of power, in terms of **A**'s intentions and interests.

First, we will iterate Russell's schema, which was previously discussed in Chapter One:

> Power may be defined as the production of intended effects.
>
> (2)

The key notion here, is intention. The effects of **A**, in

this conception of power, are only powerful insofar as they are intended; unintended effects do not count as exercises of power. Dennis Wrong, author of Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses, is a more modern theorist who has recently modifed Russell's conception, arguing that power consists in "intended and effective influence" (3). In Wrong's view, power is:

> the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen (emphasis added) effects on others. (4)

An important modification has been made to Russell's schema in Wrong's conceptualization: a criterion of intentionality has been added. That is to say, in Wrong's conception of power, **A** requires an ancillary ability: **A** must be able to **foresee** what will happen to **B** (i.e. how **B** will respond), when **B** is subjected to **A**'s exercise of power.

Two charges could easily be made against Wrong's schema. First, we might state that to require (as a necessary criterion) that **A foresee** how **B** will react, for an exercise of power to take place, is quixotic. Wrong's requirement, it would appear, is one which asks that **A** be practically omniscient; something which **A** is evidently not. Moreover, conundrums emerge when we consider the political act of voting. At the time when individuals vote, obviously, they do not know how the election will

turn out. Yet, if no people can foresee the election of the party which they ultimately vote into office (as is the case), then, according to Wrong, no power is exercised by the voters.

The second charge against Wrong's schema, is directed toward Russell's original impetus: the requirement of intended effects on **A**'s behalf. This concern, clearly, has a considerable purview; most conceptions of power incorporate the notion that the **intention** of **A** is of crucial importance. P. H. Partridge, however, in his article "Some Notes on the Concept of Power", provides an excellent criticism of those conceptions of power which hold **A**'s intentions as a criterion. He avers:

> it appears, roughly, speaking, that unintended effects are equated with being influenced when **B** becomes more like **A**, adopts his opinions, or his preferences, or his way of living: the once much-discussed `embourgeoisiement'of the working class is perhaps a sociological example of influence in the form of unintended effects, and one that supports the point already made that a realistic account of social power can hardly afford to ignore influence as the production of unintended effects.
>
> (5)

Partridge, in this passage, makes an excellent point which is amenable to Lukes' "three-dimensional" (6) view of power. Here, it is remarked that non-conscious, or, at least, the **unintentional** effects produced by **A** in **B** (i.e. **B** co-opting **A**'s ways of life) are definitely within the scope of power.

Partridge's overall view of power, however, does involve a certain delimitation of the realm of unintended effects. When **B** becomes more like **A**, he argues, **A** exercises power. Yet, Partridge states that unintended influence which does **not** lead **B** to be more like **A**, is **not** a species of power:

> On the other hand, if the unintended effect the parent has on the child is to stiffen the child's determination to be as different from the parent as possible, such influence would not be taken as an instance of power.
>
> (7)

Partridge's conception of power, then, is one which acknowledges the salience of <u>some</u> unintended effects, but denies that certain unintended effects, namely, those which do not make **B** more like **A**, are exercises of power.

Dahl and Oppenheim are two theorists whose conceptions of power contrast with those of Russell, Wrong, and Partridge (8). And, neither Dahl nor Oppenheim subscribes to the delimitations on unintended effects placed by Partridge. Dahl, for example, writes of a certain "negative power":

> If, whenever I ask my son to stay home on Saturday morning to mow the lawn, my request has the inevitable effect of inducing him to go swimming, when he would otherwise have stayed home, I do have a curious kind of negative power over him.
>
> (9)

Clearly, Dahl is in disagreement with Partridge here; Partridge has argued that exercises of influence, which do

not make **B** more like **A**, are not exercises of power (10). Nevertheless, Dahl's position appears to be quite a bit stronger on this particular point, insofar as it incorporates such actual, "negative" events as are described above. We realize, of course, that Dahl's notion of "negative power" is a positivistic one; he has maintained that power can only be said to be exercised in situations where there is an observable conflict of interests (i.e. expressed policy preferences) (11).

Oppenheim, on the other hand, seems to purport to a conception of power which is not so limited. In his admirable work, Dimensions of Freedom, Oppenheim refers to exercises of power both in situations of persuasion and disuasion, in a non-positivistic sense. In fact, Oppenheim's conceptualization of power is one of the more cogent that we will encounter, and serves well to help show the sense and viability of unintended exercises of power.

Power, Oppenheim writes, and influence (which is subsumed by power, according to his view), can be exercised "in a direction contrary to the influencer's intentions and wishes" (12). For example, he argues,:

> Advertisers intend to persuade the public to buy the advertised product, but...Coca Cola signs on the Grand Canal might have the opposite effect. (13)

That is, such advertising might dissuade more sensitive tourists from buying the product (14). In such a situation, it would appear to be the case that power is exercised against A's intentions.

A further example from Oppenheim, however, truly demonstrates how conceptions of power based in the intentions of A lack in scope. He contextualizes his example in terms of effects which are detrimental to B, and obviously unintended by A:

> The members of a congressional investigations committee may or may not intend to destroy the reputation of a witness; even when they do so intentionally, they probably do not want to deprive him of his livelihood and to prevent him from finding other employment; yet, this may be the consequence of a hearing.
>
> (15)

Oppenheim shows his erudition here. It is evident that, in such an example, power is exercised by the committee (A) over the witness (B). Even though none of the committee members intends to make it the case that the witness cannot find employment, after they assassinate his character, **it is yet an effect of the hearing.** In Oppenheim's example, the committee exercises its power (intended or unintended) to adversely affect the witness' life.

Even though Oppenheim does well to disabuse us of the notion that power is exercised only in accordance with A's

intentions, he falls somewhat short in the restrictions which he places on exercises of power. Although, as we have seen, Oppenheim claims that exercises of power are not limited to the intended effects of **A**, he argues that, for power to be exercised, there must be a **deliberate** action on **A**'s part:

> I maintain that, while all acts of power are deliberate, that is, at least to some degree consciously motivated, power may be exercised unintentionally.
>
> (16)

In explicating the distinction between deliberate and intentional acts, Oppenheim states:

> Whenever I act deliberately, I **intend** (emphasis added) to realize a certain goal.
>
> (17)

It would appear to be the case, unfortunately, that Oppenheim stultifies himself; deliberate acts, he explains, are **all intended**. Thus, deliberate acts are not clearly distinct from intended acts; rather, they are a sub-species of them. Let us assume that Oppenheim does not purport to such a problematic definition of deliberate acts; the notion of deliberation (as he indicates in the former of the above two passages) can be delineated in another fashion.

If deliberate acts are "at least to some degree consciously motivated," then we can see at least a potentially viable demarcation between intended and

deliberate acts. A deliberate act, in this sense, would be an act which **A** consciously thinks about. That is, **A** will have to at least **consciously consider** the act which he ultimately performs, for power to be exercised. In this way, Oppenheim argues, a sleepwalker will not exercise any power (18).

The problem with the criterion of deliberation, aside from the fact that it seems to be practically inextricable from **some** sort of intention (which, as we have seen, he realizes is not necessarily linked to power), is that it **does not seem to be crucial to the essence of power.** In other words, deliberation does not appear to be a necessary condition of power. Some exercises of power, as Bachrach & Baratz have pointed out, do not appear to require deliberation at all. In Power and Poverty, they write:

> to the extent that a person or group -consciously or unconsciously- creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power.
>
> (19).

If, as Bachrach & Baratz aver, a politician unconsciously (i.e. without conscious consideration, deliberation) mobilizes his "bias," when he uses and alters institutional procedures to his own benefit (but at the expense of others), that politician can be said to exercise power (20).

Bachrach & Baratz' point is well-taken; political figures **do** indeed seem to exercise power, when they unconsciously work in and on an institutional framework, and their actions result in some form of conflict amongst individuals or groups. Furthermore, Partridge's remarks about "**B** becoming more like **A**" (21), as we have seen, are like Bachrach & Baratz' point in a way: according to Partridge:

> we may say that **A** has power over **B** in the sense that he, albeit **unconsciously** (emphasis added), decides for **B**, is the dominant character of the pair.
>
> (22)

Neither intention nor deliberation, then, appears to be a necessary condition of an exercise of power. Yet, there is another position which eschews intention and deliberation, and locates power in the **preferences** of **A**. Nagel, in his Descriptive Analysis of Power, proffers an argument concerning the purportedly necessary condition of **A**'s preferences in a power relation.

Nagel argues that **A**'s intentions and deliberations are not what is truly important in a power relation. Rather, he proposes, it is the preferences of **A** which matter. He gives a schematic characterization of power:

> A power relation, actual or potential, is an actual or potential causal relation between the preferences of an actor regarding an outcome and the outcome itself.
>
> (23)

As Nagel says, the "causal variable" (24) in the schema is the actor's preference, but not the actor himself. Thus, he claims,:

> The statement "**A** exercised power over **B**" is to be construed as "**A**'s preferences caused **B**'s behavior".
>
> (25)

In this conception of power, what we immediately realize is that Nagel's notion of preferences are **coextensive with the subjectivist interests of A**. That is, his conception of power does not rest upon **A**'s intentions, or **A**'s deliberations; power, in his view, is instead related to **A**'s "preference for the outcome caused" (26). Nagel is very lucid on this point:

> In defining power as causation by preferences, I have opted to keep the concept within the empiricist tradition, which bases analyses on subjective wants. To do otherwise, it seems to me, would make "power" more relevant to normative than to empirical analysis, since it is hard to obtain agreement about objective interests.
>
> (27)

The subjectivist view of interests -preferences- which he maintains, is contrasted here with objectivist interests [which Connolly and Lukes incorporate (28)]. Although Nagel's is a position which is quite unique, and is also quite coherent, it too is flawed; unfortunately, what becomes clear is that exercises of power take place outside of the purported "interests" -subjective or objective- of **A**.

The problem in those theorists' conceptions of power which set these delimiting criteria on **A**'s behalf (i.e. intention, deliberation, or interest), is that they are too narrow in scope. In a consideration of **misinterpretation**, that is, what occurs when **B** misinterprets **A**, in what appears to be a salient and palpable exercise of power, the narrowness of such theorists' focus come to light.

De Crespigny, once again, leads us to an understanding of the unnecessary nature of intentions, deliberations, and interests, in his well-written article "Power and its Forms." Primarily, he gives an example which shows the inadequacy of conceptualizations of power based in the intentions of **A**. However, **mutatis mutandis**, De Crespigny's remarks point towards the unnecessary essence of **A**'s interests, in terms of exercises of power, too. He states:

> There is a type of situation in which one might want to say that power is being exerted in spite of the fact that **B fails** to act in conformity with **A**'s intentions. This is where **B** acts in accordance with what **he believes** to be **A**'s intentions, and as he would not otherwise act, but where his belief is a mistaken one, either because **A** has other intentions or because he has no relevant intentions at all.
>
> (29)

When **B** simply **fails** to act in accordance with **A**'s intentions, De Crespigny maintains, although **B tries** and **wants** to satisfy **A**'s intentions, power is exercised. Although De Crespigny himself appears to be somewhat wary

of such a step, he seems to be right on the mark. Let us construct a scenario which shows the veracity of his tentative point.

The scenario which we will construct, will not just show how power is exercised outside of **A's intentions**, but how it is exercised outside of **A's interests as well**. We will discuss, after the scenario is presented, how none of **A's** intention, preference (i.e. Nagel's "subjective interest"), or objective interest (i.e. Connolly and Lukes' notion of "real" interests) is satisfied in the evident and ostensive power relation.

Imagine the following scenario: A clandestine meeting of revolutionaries is taking place, with representatives from several large political groups present. The group leaders are all seated around a large table, as they listen attentively to their radical demagogue rant about a forthcoming election. The demagogue (**A**) tells all of the group leaders that, if they are to have any of their interests recognized, they must all rally their forces and vote for candidate **Jones**. The meeting ends, and the group leaders go their separate ways.

One of the group leaders (**B**), however, misinterprets the message of the demagogue (**A**)-- he goes back to his area, and tells all of his people to vote for **Smith**. He

does not do so out of spite or malice; he sincerely believes that the demagogue said to vote for **Smith**. The group leader's people vote for **Smith**, and a party is elected which ultimately captures and imprisons the demagogue and all of the revolutionaries.

In this example, **A** exercises power over **B**. The group leader **listens** to the demagogue at the meeting, **intending** to do what is asked of him. He also makes a sincere effort to do the bidding of the demagogue, tries his best, and unfortunately comes up quite short. Here, **A** gets **B** to do something he would probably not do; the group leader would not tell his people to vote for **Smith**, unless he thought that the demagogue said to do so. In other words, **A causes B to believe and do something which, although it is not in accordance with A's preferences, intentions, or interests** (subjective or objective), **does quite evidently appear to be an exercise of power on A's part.**

It would thus seem to be the case that <u>none</u> of **A's** intentions, deliberations, interests, or preferences are necessary elements in a typical exercise of power. When **A** causes **B** to do something, as we have seen, it can easily **backfire**; that is, **A's** interests, intentions, and preferences are sometimes <u>countermanded</u> or <u>over-run</u> in a power relationship. Deliberation, too, does not appear to be necessary to the exercise of political power-- the

"organizing in and out of issues" (30) can, as Bachrach & Baratz have shown, easily occur **unconsciously**. And, Wrong's criterion of "foreseen effects" is quite clearly quixotic: it cannot account for important socio-political phenomena such as voting, nor does it appear to accommodate the unconscious "mobilisation of bias" described by Bachrach & Baratz in Power and Poverty (31).

Since the intentions, interests, preferences, foreseen effects, and deliberations of individuals are **not necessary elements** of a power relation, **we can conclude that power operates outside of them.** In other words when power is on occasion linked to (for instance) A's intentions, it is so contingently, since power courses through a realm which envelops **both** that which humans intend, and that which they do not. Although, as we will soon see, power does not operate in a sphere completely detached from humans, it does indeed manifest itself in a realm which is by no means delimited by individual interest or intention.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR:

1) Some theorists in particular: Field (1956), Easton (1966), Goldhamer & Shils (1939), and Rees (1950).
2) Russell (1938), p. 35.
3) Clegg (1989), p. 73.
4) Wrong (1979), p. 2.
5) Partridge (1963), p. 114.
6) Lukes (1974), Chap. 3.
7) Partridge (1963), p. 114.
8) **See (1)**
9) Dahl (1957), p. 205.
10) Partridge (1963), p. 114.
11) Dahl (1957), Chap. 3.
12) Oppenheim (1961), p. 92.
13) Oppenheim (1961), pp. 92-93.
14) Oppenheim (1961), p. 27.
15) Oppenheim (1961), p. 93.
16) Oppenheim (1961), p. 92.
17) Oppenheim (1961), p. 17.
18) **ibid.**
19) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), p. 8.
20) Lukes (1974), pp. 16-17.
21) Partridge (1963), p. 114.
22) **ibid.**
23) Nagel (1975), p. 29.
24) Nagel (1975), p. 30.
25) **ibid.**
26) **ibid.**
27) Nagel (1975), p. 108.
28) See Chapter 3.
29) De Crespigny (1968), p. 195.
30) Bachrach & Baratz, in Power and Poverty, originally from Schattscheider.
31) Lukes (1974), pp. 16-17.

CHAPTER FIVE: POWER AND DISTANCIATION

Paul Ricoeur's significance, from the perspective of the socio-political theorist, is unquestionably great. His massive bibliography consists of almost three hundred items, all of which evince his profound sagacity. Throughout his life, Ricoeur has written theoretical treatises that have proven to be very germane to politics; one of his greatest works, which gives excellent insight into his modern thought, is his essay entitled "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," first published in Philosophy Today, in 1973.

In an examination of the essay, it is revealed that Ricoeur proffers a pentapartite distanciation, between the individual and the realms of speaking, writing, and text. This distanciation, we realize, turns out to be remarkably similar to the interstice that we elucidated between actual exercises of power, and the five modes of human existence which, as we have seen, are contingently related to power: the intentions, interests, preferences, deliberations, and foreseen effects of **A**.

There is an antimony, Ricoeur states, which emerges from Gadamer's **magnum opus** Truth and Method: the apparent opposition between distanciation and participation. He begins:

> This opposition is an antimony because it gives rise to an undesirable alternative: on the one hand, alienating distanciation is the attitude that makes the objectification which reigns in the human sciences possible; on the other hand, this distanciation that is the very condition which accounts for the scientific status of the sciences is at the same time a break that destroys the fundamental and primordial relation by which we belong to and participate in the historical reality which we claim to construct as an object.
>
> (1)

The distanciation proposed by the natural scientists, Ricoeur argues, makes objectification possible; however, it also lends itself to the homologous destruction of the notion of participation. The very **title** of Gadamer's work (i.e. **Truth and Method**), Ricoeur proposes, is a pithy representation of such a distanciating position: either one adopts the "methodological attitude," thereby foregoing ontological import, or one takes up the notion of "truth," thereby being forced out of objectivity (2).

Ricoeur claims that his particular reflections (in this article) stem from a "flat refusal" (3) of the dilemma; that is, rather than accept the dichotomy offered by "Truth and Method," he seeks to "transcend it" (4). The dominating problematic, he suggests, which testifies to a sort of distanciation that differs from the objectivist conception, is found in the **text**:

> Here, in effect, a positive, and if I may say so, a fruitful notion of distanciation is reintroduced. For me the text is much more than a particular case of interhuman communication, it

> is the paradigm of the distanciation of all communication. As such it reveals a fundamental character of the historicity of human experience, communication within and by means of distance.
>
> (5)

In this passage, Ricoeur is candid. The conception of distanciation which he plans to propose will be "fruitful," and advanced to the fore through an examination of the nature of the text, since the text captures all communicative modes of distanciation (6).

Ricoeur argues that discourse, be it written or spoken, constitutes an event (7). "The notion," he writes,:

> of discourse as event is not only legitimate but even necessary once we consider the passage from a linguistics of language or of code to a linguistics of discourse or of message.
>
> (8)

Although the distinction between language and speech (**langue et parole**) comes from Saussure, the duality between syntax and message is seen in such linguistic theorists as Chomsky (i.e. in his correlative notions of competence and performance) (9).

The nature of discourse as event (the discourse-event) is relatively complex; it has quite a multifarious character. First, Ricoeur claims,:

> discourse is realized temporally and in the present, whereas the system of language is virtual and out of time. In this sense we can, with Benveniste, speak of the "instant of discourse" to designate the occurrences of discourse as event.
>
> (10)

That is to say, the system of language is seen to be achronic, and therefore not eventual. Discourse, on the other hand, is argued by Ricoeur to be temporal and in the present, which helps to give it the status of an actual event.

The second feature of the discourse-event (again taken in contrast with language as a whole), is its reference to a subject. Ricoeur states:

> whereas language has no subject in the sense that the question "Who speaks?" does not apply at this level, discourse refers back to its speaker by means of a complex of indicators such as the personal pronouns. In this sense we can say that the instance of discourse is self-referential. The character of event is now attached to the person of the speaker and the event consists in this, that someone is speaking, that someone expresses himself in taking up speech.
>
> (11)

Here, Ricoeur maintains that whereas language as a whole is without reference to a subject, discourse does refer to a subject through the incorporation of, for instance, personal pronouns. In realizing that this is indeed an element of the nature of discourse, he argues, one becomes able to attach the purported event to someone who speaks.

Ricoeur states that there is a third sense in which discourse is an event. Whereas linguistic signs, he avers,:

> refer only to other signs within the same system with the result that language has no more a world than it has a time or subjectivity, discourse is

> always about something. It refers to a world which it is supposed to describe, express, or represent.
>
> (12)

Not only does discourse refer to a subject, Ricoeur maintains, but it is also "about something"; that is, it refers to a world. Language in general, in contrast, makes no reference to any world: it has no time or subject, and does not bring about (by itself) the world.

The fourth and final characteristic of the discourse-event, is one of exchange between subjects. "Whereas language is no more than a preliminary condition," states Ricoeur,:

> of that communication to which it furnishes its codes, it is in discourse that all messages are exchanged. In this sense, discourse alone not only has a world, but an other, another person, a hearer to whom it is addressed. The event, in this last sense, is the temporal phenomenon of exchange, the establishing of a dialogue which can be entered into, prolonged, or interrupted.
>
> (13)

The element of exchange, of an "other," is the final characteristic of the discourse-event. In discursive exchange, it is argued, a temporally significant dialogue is produced, which can be continued or ended at any time. Thus, Ricoeur maintains that the discourse-event is actual and significant for four reasons; it has: temporality, a subject, a world, and an other with whom discourse takes place.

Ricoeur proceeds to argue that the discourse-event is not the single element which constitutes discourse as a whole. Rather, he sees a dialectic of event and meaning which, together, fully explicate the essence of discourse. Ricoeur writes:

> We must now shed some light on the second pole, that of meaning, because the distanciation that makes writing possible, and the production of discourse as a work, and all the other factors that enrich the notion of distanciation, come from the tension between these two poles...To introduce this dialectic of event and meaning, I propose to say that, if all discourse is actualized as event, all discourse is understood as meaning. (14)

In this passage, Ricoeur delineates the cognitive manner in which he will renew Gadamer's notion of distanciation: by introducing a dialectic of discourse-event and meaning. Furthermore, in postulating such a dialectic, he maintains that the concepts of discourse-event and meaning will be found to be inextricably bound together.

It is in the "linguistics of speech," Ricoeur claims, that "event and meaning articulate themselves" (15). However, he realizes, there is a problem which emerges with respect to the understanding of the relationship between event and meaning:

> Just as language in actualizing itself goes beyond itself in the speech event, so speech in entering into the process of understanding goes beyond itself in the meaning. This surpassing of the event in the meaning is a characteristic of speech itself...**The very first distanciation therefore is the distanciation of the saying in**

> **the said** (emphasis added).
>
> (16)

Ricoeur, here, articulates his first conception of the distanciation in meaning: the surpassing of the saying in the said. Drawing on the work of Austin and Searle (i.e. their conception of the "speech-act"), Ricoeur states that the act of speaking is constituted on three essential levels: [1] the locutionary act; [2] the illocutionary act; and [3] the perlocutionary act (17).

The locutionary act, Ricoeur maintains, is the act of saying. That is, it is the purely propositional act itself, which is identifiable as it is exteriorized in an actual sentence. The illocutionary act, it appears, is the forcefulness of saying: that which one does **in** saying. Illocution is quite similar to locution, in that it is also often grammatically inscribed (i.e. illocution incorporates indicative modes, imperatives, subjunctives, etc.). However, the illocutionary act is seen to be **less** inscribed than the locutionary act, since phenomena such as prosody (e.g. mimicry and gesture) are not found in the locution of spoken discourse.

Perlocution, Ricoeur avers, is the "least inscribable act of discourse" (18); perlocution is that which is done **by** saying, the effects which are produced. For instance, if one were to tell another to "Close the Door!", the

certain effects (such as fear) caused in the other would be co-extensive with the perlocutionary act. Thus the notion of meaning, according to Ricoeur, is not to be understood in the "narrow sense" (19) of the propositional act alone; the illocutionary and perlocutionary elements of discourse must be accounted for as well. He writes:

> I am here giving the word **meaning** a very large acceptation that covers all the aspects and levels of the intentional exteriorization which makes the inscription of discourse possible. (20)

Writing, however, is of a different nature than speaking in Ricoeur's view; textuality is subject to further distanciations, which go far beyond the distanciation of the "saying in the said" in spoken discourse. In fact, Ricoeur states, there are three distanciations which are peculiar to writing: the distanciation from the author's intentions, discursive situation, and original audience.

"First," Ricoeur writes,:

> writing makes the text autonomous in relation to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author wanted to say...The essence of a work of art, a literary work, or a work in general, is to transcend its psycho-sociological conditions of production and to be open to an unlimited series of readings, themselves situated within different socio-cultural contexts. (21)

Clearly, Ricoeur maintains that the intentions of an

author are autonomous from the author's actualized writing. Further, there is a second distanciation referred to in this passage: the sociological decontextualization which occurs in writing. The written word, in this distanciating mode, is claimed to be open to an "unlimited series of readings" from within divergent socio-cultural contexts. In other words, the written does not appear to be dependent on the sociological conditions which brought it to the fore.

The third distanciation peculiar to written discourse, regards the phenomenon of the addressee:

> whereas the vis-a-vis is given in advance by the colloquy itself in the dialogical situation, written discourse is open to an audience virtually understood as made up of whoever knows how to read. Thus to depsychologization and desociologization through writing, we must add the emancipation of the written material in regard to the dialogical condition of oral discourse, by which I mean that the relation between writing and reading is no longer a particular case of the relation between speaking and hearing.
>
> (22)

The dialogical case with spoken discourse, it is suggested, is one which generally has a type of face-to-face presentation. Written discourse, however, has a much wider audience: those who can read (and understand) seem to be the addressees. Thus, there are three distanciations introduced by writing: a **psychological** one (with respect to the author's intentions), a **sociological** one (with

respect to those conditions which "produced" the writing), and a **dialogical** one (since the writer/reader relationship is opposed to the dialogic colloquy).

Beyond the realm of the simple written word, Ricoeur avers, one finds the phenomenon of the **text**. When discourse is "realized as a work" (23), he writes, there are three distinctive characteristics to be found. That is, in a **text**, there is **totality**, **codification**, and **configurative style** (24).

Ricoeur remarks that discourse as a work can be distinguished from ordinary writing, due to the fact that a work is a sequence longer than a sentence, which lends itself to problems of comprehension apropos of "the final and closed totality which constitutes the work as such" (25). He is laconic on this point:

> In this sense, a text is not merely a sequence of sentences on equal footing and separately understandable. A text works as the first con-text for each partial meaning. As such it delineates a relatively closed space for each individual sentence's interpretation.
>
> (26)

Evidently, it is argued that one cannot adequately understand any particular sentence of a text, without the context (given by the closed nature of the text) as a whole. As Ricoeur suggests, the character of <u>arrangement</u>, of totality (i.e. apposition from beginning through middle to end), makes the notion of propositional separation

vacuous in the consideration of discourse as a work.

The second dimension of discourse as a work, is its:

> (subordination) to the rules of specific kinds of **codification**, which are traditionally called "literary genres." In the same way as grammatical and lexical rules are the required "codes" for producing "messages" in the form of a sentence, the codes which we are now considering are the appropriate conditions for producing those second-order units of discourse which we call a poem, an essay, a narrative, etc..
>
> (27)

Here, Ricoeur parallels the different genres of literary articulation with the codification of language. The productive conditions of a work, it is argued, are those codes which lead to such emergent "units of discourse" as essays, narratives, or poems. Ricoeur wants to stress that the notion of genre is not to be conceived of as a species of classification; rather, it is to be seen as a means of production. That is, a literary genre is genetic (as opposed to taxonomic); the mastery of a genre is the mastery of a certain type of "competence" which yields practical guidelines in terms of a work's performance (28).

The third characteristic of discourse as a work, is what Ricoeur calls its configurative style. The style of a work, he states, lets the reader see it as an individual (i.e. as peculiar):

> The individuality of works of art and of discourse is so characteristic of what is a work

> that the best examples that come to our minds to illustrate what we call an individual are offered by works of discourse (**this** poem, **this** play) and by works of art (**this** painting, **this** sculpture). (29)

Ricoeur argues, in this passage, that some of the most paradigmatic instances of individuality are realized in, for instance, divergent poems or plays. And, he states, the difference between style and genre in a work is quite clear: genre is a "generative process" (30), while the notion of style relates to the chronologically subsequent conditions which rule "the insertion of structure into an everyday practice" (31).

Ricoeur maintains that the concept of style in discourse as a work, is "an accumulation of the two (discursive) characteristics of event and meaning" (32); it is only in the very form of the work that style can be found. Further, he states that, since style tends to individualize,:

> it retroactively points to its author. Thus the word author belongs to the stylistic...The author is the artisan of a work of language. (33)

Ricoeur, as we have seen, recognizes and acknowledges the multiple distanciations with respect to the author's intentions, original sociological conditions, and initial addressees. However, he **does** claim that the style of a work at least points to its author (as opposed to simply pointing to <u>an</u> author), much in the same way that a

baroque building can point to its architect. Evidently, Ricoeur does not argue that the style of a work is inextricably tied to its author; rather, he maintains that stylistic elements **indicate over distance**.

With an understanding of Ricoeur's characterization of the phenomenon of the **work** in place, we can move to an examination of the fifth and final mode of distanciation: a separation which is connected with the "world of the text" itself (34). This type of distanciation, he writes,:

> is no longer a distanciation which affects the relation of the discourse to its speaker, of the writing to the writer, of the work to its author; it is a distanciation which crosses the very world of the work.
>
> (35)

Ricoeur argues that when discourse becomes a text, the question of **reference** becomes problematic. That is, there is no longer a "common situation" (36) between reader and writer (as there is in spoken discourse), and, the "concrete conditions" (37) required to point something out, are also gone.

Ricoeur's proposal, with respect to the solution of this problem, is informed and advanced by the works of Husserl and Heidegger. The "abolition of first-order reference," he avers,:

> an abolition accomplished by fiction and poetry, is the condition of possibility for the liberation of a second order of reference which reaches the world not only at the level of

> manipulable objects, but at the level Husserl designated by the expression **Lebenswelt** and Heidegger by "being-in-the-world."
>
> (38)

This second order of reference, it appears, is the one which is **peculiar to the world of the work itself**. That is to say, Ricoeur states that what is to be interpreted in a text is a **proposed world**:

> a world that I might inhabit and wherein I might project my ownmost possibilities. This is what I call the world of the text, the world properly belonging to this unique text.
>
> (39)

Since the world of the text, therefore, is not the world of common, everyday language, Ricoeur says that a further distanciation comes forth: **the distanciation of the real from the work** (40). Moreover, he states, fiction and poetry "intend being," not in the sense of <u>givenness</u> (i.e. empirically observable reality), but in the mode of **possibility** (41); a textually fictional world is thus a possible world.

It should be remarked that Ricoeur believes that the metaphor is of no small importance to the uncovering of possible worlds, or to the phenomenon of the speech-act in general. In his essay "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," Ricoeur suggests that texts speak of possible worlds, and that "interpretation becomes the grasping of the world-propositions opened up by the non-ostensive references of the text" (42). Metaphor, he

argues, is a substantial contributor to overall interpretation, as it is an important local phenomenon:

> The explication of metaphor as a local event in the text contributes to the interpretation itself of the work as a whole. We could say that, if the interpretation of local metaphors is enlightened by the interpretation of the text as a whole and by the disentanglement of the kind of world it projects, then the interpretation...as a whole is controlled, reciprocally, by the explication of metaphor as a local phenomenon.
>
> (43)

The role of metaphor, clearly, is one of **local explication**: in a hermeneutically circular fashion, the interpretation of local (textual) metaphors is **informed** and **supported** by the interpretation of the text as a whole, while the interpretation of the text as a whole is "controlled" by the explication of the metaphors which constitute (**pars pro toto**) the text. As Ricoeur writes in The Rule of Metaphor, poetic discourse serves speculative discourse because it **redescribes the world** and can create meaning through the second-order referent. Yet, he claims, no discourse (metaphoric or otherwise) is stated outside of a "metaphorically engendered conceptual network" (44); the two poles mutually reinforce each other. Therefore, it is quite apparent that metaphor is germane to Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutical distanciation: metaphor, through polysemic description and redescription, is **constitutive of** (at the local level), and **revealed through**, the interpretation of texts.

Distanciation, Ricoeur concludes, thus has an undeniable importance with respect to hermeneutics and the problematic of ontological understanding. The autonomous nature of the text, for instance,:

> has a hermeneutically important consequence. Distanciation is not the product of our methodology and therefore is not something added or parasitic, rather **it is constitutive of the phenomenon of the text as written** (emphasis added).
>
> (45)

That is to say, distanciation is not contingent upon methodological considerations; **it is an emergent property of the written text**. Distanciation, then, is revealed to be not only that which understanding must conquer-- it is also the hermeneutical **condition of possible understanding** (46). And, since the discourse of a work is only available **in** and **through** the work, through the dialectic of the discourse-event & meaning, interpretation is evinced here as the "reply to the fundamental distanciation" constitutive of human objectification in discursive works, similar to the objectifications found in an individual's art or labor (47).

Ricoeur's conception of distanciation appears to be parallel to the notion of power which we are advancing, in several ways. However, it is also divergent from that which we have revealed about power, in some very important aspects. Nevertheless, it seems to be trivially the case

that all proposed analogies fall short in some respects; let us bring to light the similarities and differences between power and Ricoeurian distanciation.

Ricoeur's remarks regarding style "pointing to its author," that stylistic elements indicate over distance (48), show an initial and substantial likeness to our notion of the gap between power-exerciser and the exercise of power itself. While the author is "the artisan of a work of language" (49), so is the power-holding and power-exercising individual a sort of artisan: his spatio-temporal location, in what Arendt has so aptly called "the web of human relationships" (50), can sometimes be inferred from the ripples which move away from his localized exercise(s) of power. That is to say, an author's style can indicate, over distance, the author himself; an exercise of power can indicate, through an examination of the resultant effects, that a power-exerciser was present.

A second and pivotal point of similarity, is found at Ricoeur's consideration of whether distanciation is a contingent phenomenon. As we have seen, he states quite clearly that it is not: it is not something "added or parasitic," rather, it is "constitutive of the phenomenon of the text as written" (51). Distanciation, therefore, is an emergent property of (for instance) a text. With power,

there is also no contingency in this respect: power is, as we have come to see, essentially exercised separately from our intentions, interests, preferences, deliberations, and what we can foresee. However, this does not mean that power is completely autonomous from us; rather, power (in the social/political sense) supervenes on individuals. That is to say, without people (to exercise power in, on, and through) there would be no exercise of political power. Certainly, there may be exercises of power in the mere physical sense (as articulated by Hobbes and Russell), but, without any individuals, socio-political power can not emerge. In this sense, power is not parasitic or contingent on humanity; it requires the existence of individuals, if it is to be made manifest.

Third, Ricoeur's notion with respect to the new signification of the text (i.e. that it does not necessarily accord with that which the author intended) (52) is homologous to that which we earlier elucidated about power. Ricoeur acknowledges the fact that that which a text signifies does not represent that which the author "wanted to say" (53); in the same way, what a powerholder means to do, deliberates over, and thinks that he foresees, are not necessarily found in an exercise of power. In this light, the absurdity of the notion of the "responsibility" of the powerholder (as per, for instance,

Connolly (54)) is truly evinced: how can one hold another responsible for that which is not necessarily within the visceral bounds of what they intend, prefer, or deliberate over?

Evidently, although these points-of-similarity are helpful to our investigation into the nature of the concept of power, there are yet some important differences between power and Ricoeurian distanciation, which must be addressed. First, we realize that Ricoeur's notion of distanciation is salient to different realms: the oral, the written, and the textual. The fifth distanciation -- the distanciation of the real from the work-- is peculiar to the text alone. A text, it appears, embodies all of the five distanciations discussed, whereas oral discourse, in contrast, often involves only the distanciation of "the saying in the said" (55). Power, it would seem, does not have such different and clearly delineated spheres: instead, it permeates and works through all realms, without admitting of degrees vis-à-vis the interstice between its exercise, and our intentions/interests/etc.. In other words, while there are different degrees of distanciation in Ricoeur's conceptual scheme, there is one set of "distanciations" found in an examination of power, which does not seem to admit to degrees of any sort.

Secondly, and most importantly, the distanciations

suggested by Ricoeur are distanciations from what **was**, whereas the gap between exercises of power and individual intention/interest/etc.. is one which is never initially closed. Ricoeur discusses that which understanding must **conquer** through interpretation: a regaining of authorial intention, the discursive situation, the original audience, and a coalescence of real and textual worlds. Part of ontological understanding, therefore, involves bridging the gaps which opened up in and through the author's act of writing. In this way, the condition of distanciation is further different from the chasm between power and intentions/interests/ etc.: hermeneutics seeks (in part) to close the distance between interpreter and authorial intent, a condition which **necessarily was**, whereas the powerholder attempts to exercise power in accordance with (for instance) that which he intends, which is an interstice that is **not necessarily ever bridged**. The interpreter, therefore, in part seeks a <u>return</u> to that from which the text was <u>removed</u>; the powerholder attempts to <u>align</u> his exercises of power with those personal elements which were never part of the manifest power itself.

Finally, Ricoeurian distanciation is distinguished from power in that the text is seen to be "the paradigm of the distanciation of all communication" (56). While the text

is the perfect case of distanciation, the dialogical situation would appear to be, at first glance, the paradigm of the exercise of power. Most exercises of power, that is, seem to be found in day-to-day oral discourse; thus, while Ricoeurian distanciation is most fully realized in the phenomenon of the text, the phenomenon of political power would seem to be most commonly and truly actualized in other spheres, such as the oral/dialogic realm.

Ricoeur's conception of distanciation, then, has aided our investigation: it has proven useful in our attempt to bring power into focus, both by helping to show what power is, and what power is not. Just like the pentapartite distanciation that Ricoeur suggests is found in textuality, there are the five elements of interests, intentions, deliberations, preferences, and that which an individual can foresee, which are distinct from power itself. Furthermore, in a mode similar to Ricoeurian distanciation, power can have an indicative characteristic, it is necessarily anchored to its base (individuals), and it is often not exercised in accordance with what a powerholder deliberates over, means to do, and thinks that he can forsee. Unlike Ricoeur's notion, power is not different in different realms, it does not exemplify a type of "return" to what was originally the

case (i.e. a re-joining of power with intentions/interests/etc.), and it is not typically and paradigmatically found in such embodiments as texts; rather, power seems to be much more commonly exercised through oral discourse.

Our investigation, then, has led us to a pivotal point: we have, through our examination of more modern conceptions of power, discerned that the character of power is remarkably similar to Ricoeur's concept of distanciation in important ways. We have also advanced our inquiry, evidently, by bringing to light that which power is not; it is not, for instance, different in the realms of speech and writing, nor is it aptly characterized by a "return" to a previous condition, regarding individual interests/intentions/etc.. Let us now construct a schema of power, keeping all of the above concerns in mind, which does not place undue restrictions on the breadth of power, and grasps it in its very essence.

ENDNOTES to CHAPTER FIVE:

1) Ricoeur (1973), p.129.
2) **ibid.**
3) **ibid.**
4) **ibid.**
5) Ricoeur (1973), p.130.
6) **ibid.**
7) **ibid.**
8) **ibid.**
9) Chomsky and Saussure concern themselves with syntax and message, in (respectively) Chapter 9 ("Syntax and Semantics") of Chomsky's Syntactic Structures, and in Saussure's Course in General Linguistics.
10) Ricoeur (1973), p.131.
11) **ibid.**
12) **ibid.**
13) **ibid.**
14) **ibid.**
15) Ricoeur (1973), p.132.
16) **ibid.**
17) **ibid.**
18) **ibid.**
19) **ibid.**
20) Ricoeur (1973), p.133.
21) **ibid.**
22) Ricoeur (1973), p.134.
23) **ibid.**
24) Ricoeur (1973), p.135.
25) **ibid.**
26) **ibid.**
27) **ibid.**
28) **ibid.**
29) Ricoeur (1973), p.137.
30) **ibid.**
31) **ibid.**
32) Ricoeur (1973), p.138.
33) Ricoeur (1973), p.139.
34) **ibid.**
35) **ibid.**
36) Ricoeur (1973), p.140.
37) **ibid.**
38) **ibid.**
39) Ricoeur (1973), pp.40-41.
40) Ricoeur (1973), p.141.
41) **ibid.**
42) "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," from Regan & Stewart (1978), p.144.
43) "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," p.147.
44) Ricoeur (1977) [The Rule of Metaphor], p.287.

ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE (Contd.):

45) Ricoeur (1973), p.133.
46) **ibid.**
47) Ricoeur (1973), p.139.
48) **ibid.**
49) **ibid.**
50) Arendt's exceptional notion of the "Web of Relationships" is found in Chap. V of The Human Condition (1958); the metaphor indicates the intangible yet real nature of the phenomena of acting and speaking (p.183).
51) Ricoeur (1973), p.133.
52) **ibid.**
53) **ibid.**
54) Connolly (1974), pp.22-23.
55) Ricoeur (1973), p.132.
56) Ricoeur (1973), p.130.

CHAPTER SIX: A NEW SCHEMA OF POWER

To properly grasp the concept of power, we have learned, one must not place undue limitations on that which it can properly be said to subsume. An individual's interests, it is clear, are contingently related to power: they are not necessarily served or abused in its exercise. It is the same case with the intentions of **A**: a salient power-relation can be shown, as we have seen, wherein **A**'s intentions are not realized in the least. Furthermore, the situation remains the same apropos of that which **A** can foresee, that which **A** prefers, and that which **A** deliberates over.

In our discussion of essential contestability, we proposed to put forth a conception of power that was, if not uncontestable, at least less contestable than the rest. It was also argued that the concept of power is a socio-political concept which is not remarkably normative (i.e. that it is no more normative than more "trivial" concepts like "table"); that is to say, that the concept of power does not have what Gallie calls a "normative criterion" (1), and it does not necessarily tie the powerholder to some notion of "responsibility," as Connolly claims (2). Let us now unveil our schema, and reveal a conceptualization of power which acknowledges and accommodates that which our investigation has brought to

light.

The schema can be stated as follows:

POWER IS: **A**'s ability to cause **B** to believe, or not-believe, OR perform, or not-perform (respectively) some concept or action.

The nature of "or," in the schema, is disjunctive: if any one or more of **B**'s believing/not-believing, or performing/not-performing (respectively) concepts or actions is satisfied, as caused by **A**, then **A** is said to have exercised power. That is to say, if **A** causes **B** to (for example) perform an action, **A** can be said to have exercised power. However, if **A** also causes **B** to believe or not-believe something in the process, **A** will still (obviously) be said to have exercised power: it is only the degree of power which can be said to change. Thus, if **B** satisfies any one or more of the following conditions: [1] believing a concept [2] not-believing a concept [3] performing an action [4] not-performing an action, as caused by **A**, **A** can be said to have exercised power with respect to **B**.

Evidently, the nature of the notion of "believing a concept," is not altogether difficult to decipher. Nor is it the case that the idea of **A** causing **B** to "perform an action" is very abstruse. However, the concepts of "not-belief" and "not-perform" require explication, as they are

heretofore unknown in any academic sphere.

Let us begin with "belief." It is proposed that if **A** causes **B** to believe a concept, then **A** exercises power. Such a consideration captures and accommodates a wide range of socio-political phenomena: for instance, consider an orator at a public rally. The orator rants and raves about how great his political party happens to be, and many people listen. As is often the case, some people who attend the rally will be taken by the orator's style and message; some people will be unimpressed or even repulsed. However, the orator exercises power, if only a little, with respect to all those who listen, hear, and, as a result, believe some new concept or idea. If the orator (**A**) is addressing the crowd about his glorious communist party, he will attempt to sway as many people as possible toward his end: an acceptance of his party as benevolent, fruitful, and worth supporting. Those who the orator causes to believe such a thing (or things), are affected in such a way that we can clearly say that they have undergone an exercise of power: the orator (**A**) has exercised power over the attendant individual (**B**), when he causes them to believe that his party is, for instance, the "one for them."

However, power (as we have seen) does not appear to only work in this fashion; that is, it does not only work

in accordance with that which **A** intends. In this example, **A** intends to cause **B** to believe that his particular party is the most benevolent, fruitful, and worth supporting. With respect to some individuals, **A** will do exactly this: he will cause them to believe that which he intends (and prefers, and which may be in his interests). Yet, the orator exercises power when he causes an individual to believe exactly the opposite as well. That is, when the orator causes an individual to believe that his communist party is **not** the one for them, he also exercises power. Consider a different **B** in the crowd: **B** listens to the orator's exuberant speech, and is thereby repulsed. The orator, **A**, causes **B** to believe exactly that which **A** would rather he did not; **B** believes that **A**'s communist party is malevolent, fruitless, and not worth supporting at all. When **A** causes **B** to believe such a concept (or concepts), **A** can properly be said to have exercised power.

Thus, in our example of the orator, we can say that the idea of "**A** causing **B** to believe a concept" is satisfied both in the **positive** (i.e. that which A intends/prefers/etc.) and in the **negative** (i.e. that which A does not intend/prefer/etc.) sense. With respect to our example of the orator, then, we can delineate two politically salient modes of belief which are the conceptual results of **A**'s oration, and happen to be diametrically opposed to each

other:

[1] The orator's communist party is benevolent, fruitful, and worth supporting.

[2] The orator's communist party is malevolent, fruitless, and not worth supporting.

It might appear as though we have exhausted all of our doxastic options under the heading of "belief"; if a proposition such as "The National Socialist party is not the one for me" is considered to be a "belief," then what is a "not-belief?" Not-beliefs, while having a deceptive and more obscure character, actually appear to be quite common in the socio-political realm, as they are made manifest in the ordinary phenomena of **obfuscation**, **confusion**, and **indecision**.

Our example of the orator and the public rally serves well to yield an understanding of what is meant by "not-belief." Consider **B**, in the crowd, who believes (for example) that the democratic party is the party which is the best for him. **B** listens to the orator (**A**) exalt the wonders of the communist party, and becomes confused: **he no longer knows what he believes**. Before the rally, **B** was a card-carrying democrat; after the orator finishes his speech, **B** no longer knows whether he likes the democratic party or the communist party. Such is the common phenomenon of the not-belief: **A** causes **B** to become **confused vis-à-vis some concept** (e.g. whether the orator's

political party is better for B), such that where B used to have a specific belief, there is instead obfuscation, and indecisiveness with regard to what to believe.

In the doxastic sphere of concepts, then, we can say that power is exercised in two modes. First, when **A** causes **B** to believe a concept, **A** can be said to have exercised power. Second, when **A** causes **B** to become confused (not an uncommon occurrence) regarding some concept, where **B** was formerly of a belief, power can also be said to have been exercised by **A**.

In our schema, there is also the realm of action which we must descant. Like the doxastic sphere of beliefs and not-beliefs, the behavioral realm is divided into two zones: actions performed and not-performed. When **A** causes **B** to perform an action, we can say that **A** exercises power. And, when **A** causes **B** to not-perform an action, we can also safely say that power is exercised by **A**. To explicate the notion of performing an action, let us consider the following example: a beaten and disgruntled general refuses to sign a treaty. The dignitaries and officials from the opposing army tell him that he must sign the document on pain of death, but the general refuses; he is proud and honorable, and he knows that if he signs the treaty, the citizens of his country will be put to death. The officials of the opposing army attempt to give him

reasons why he should simply sign the document, but the general is adamant: nothing will change his mind. So, one of the opposing officials grabs the general's hand and forces him to sign the document, while the general glares unyieldingly at the group.

In this example the official (**A**) exercises power regarding the general (**B**), by causing him to perform an action, viz. the unconsensual and forced signing of the document. While the officials attempted to give the general reasons why he should sign the treaty, that is to say, although they **attempted** to cause him to believe that signing was a good thing, they were unsuccessful. Here, **A** causes **B** to perform an action, which is in fact in accordance with that which **A** intends (but, obviously, does not have to be), and which may or may not yield results that are in **A**'s interests.

Not-performing an action, is that which occurs when **A** restrains or prevents **B** from doing something. We can say that **A** exercises power with respect to **B**, when **A** causes **B** to not-perform some action, such as attacking a political official, voting at a particular station, or running amok in some parliament buildings. To illustrate what is meant by the notion of "not-performing" an action, let us consider the following scenario: a group of dissident protesters prepares to storm a parliament building. A

number of police officers, sensing that the group is ready to rush the government offices, organize themselves into a human barricade. The protesters start to rush the building, but are physically stopped by the police. Here, **A** (the police officer(s)) exercises power regarding **B** (the protester(s)), by causing **B** to not-perform the storming of the parliament building.

Clearly, just as we saw with the realm of beliefs, the realm of action has a positive and negative division. The performance of an action by **B**, as caused by **A**, amounts to an exercise of power, as does the not-performance of an action by **B**, as caused by **A**.

At this point, let us examine the problematic of **degrees of power**: to what extent, in an exercise of power, can we safely say that more or less power has been exercised? It may be apparent that in distinguishing between power in the active and doxastic realms, that we incorporated examples which did not particularly join or foment the realms of action and belief. That is to say, in our explication of the notions of belief & not-belief, we saw that an exercise of power takes place when, for instance, an orator causes an individual to believe a concept or to be come confused with respect to some idea. However, we did **not** suggest that the individual (B) in the example need act on this new concept or confusion.

Furthermore, in our examples of performing & not-performing an action, one notices that the examples used to illustrate this sort of an exercise of power did **not** involve any corresponding alteration of **B**'s beliefs. In the example of the general, we see how he was adamant about not signing the document: the opposing officials, **A**, exercised power with respect to the general, **B**, without changing the content or structure of his beliefs (i.e. by causing him to believe a concept, or to become unclear/confused/indecisive/obfuscated) whatsoever. The same holds true for the instance of the protesters storming the parliament buildings: the police (**A**) caused the protesters to not-perform an action (that is, they prevented the protesters from doing that which they would have done) by forming a human barricade. Here again, no mention is made of any homologous doxastic change in **B**; the protesters still believe, as they are restrained, that the parliament building should be stormed. In other words, and simply, our examples have shown how power can <u>specifically</u> and <u>particularly</u> be exercised in each of the four specific zones of: belief, not-belief, performance, and not-performance.

When we consider the effectiveness of power in these particular zones alone, however, and when we ponder the viability of the **combination** of the spheres of action and

belief in an exercise of power, the contours of power clearly come into focus. If the orator, in our example, is able to cause an individual to believe that "the communist party is the one for me," we have said that the orator exercises power vis-à-vis this individual. If, however, all that the orator manages to cause is this simple and meager belief of a concept, and he causes no according performative actions in **B**, then we would say that not much power has been exercised at all. Consider the individual in the crowd who listens to the orator exalt his political party. The individual, let us say, after hearing the orator, believes that "the orator's communist party is the one for me." If, however, the individual leaves the rally with this new concept in mind, and never acts upon it (i.e. the mere new concept does not change his discursive practices, voting behavior, etc.), then, it would appear, very little power has been exercised. It is the same way with not-beliefs alone: if **B** becomes confused about which party is the best for him, yet **B**, a purported democrat, never votes or discusses politics anyway, then we can say that the amount of power exercised by the orator regarding **B** is minimal.

The situation is similar in a consideration of the sphere of action. If **A** causes **B** only to perform an action (e.g. the general), but does not cause any corresponding

belief or confusion of a belief in **B**, **A** can again be said to exercise a small amount of power. In the scenario with the general, we see how the general adamantly refuses to acquiesce to the wishes of his captors: he is **not** caused to believe any concept, nor does he become confused. While an opposing official does force him to sign the treaty, nothing else is caused by **A**. The case is the same with the instance of the protestors: they are physically stopped from rushing the government offices, yet, in causing **B** to not-perform such an action, **A** achieves nothing else: the protestors are still angry, directed, and unconfused--they maintain their desire to storm the building.

It would appear to be the case that the sphere of action, when measured against the realm of belief, is in itself a sphere which, when considered **by** itself (and not as coalesced with belief/not-belief) is slightly more effective for the exercise of power. That is to say, when **A** causes **B** only to believe a concept, **A** seems to exercise slightly **less** power than when he causes **B** only to perform an action. The difference, it appears, is that when **A** causes **B** only to believe (or not-believe) a concept, he does **almost nothing**; when **A** causes **B** only to perform (or not-perform) an action, he at least **does something**.

The realm of action, furthermore, has an added consideration regarding its greater effectiveness vis-à-

vis exercises of power: the phenomenon of death. In the zone of not-performance, **A**'s ultimate exercise of power is the **killing of B**; when **B** is killed, he can (obviously) perform no further actions. And, it is quite evident that **A** can kill **B**, without affecting the zones of belief/not-belief. If an assassin (**A**) snipes a political official (**B**) who is completely unaware of any danger, then **A** can properly be said to have caused **B** to not-perform any further actions. However, **A** has not caused **B** to believe any new concept, nor has he caused any not-belief (which we characterized as confusion/obfuscation/indecision/etc.) in **B**. It is true that **A**, in killing **B**, extinguishes **B**'s doxastic sphere. Lenski, in his work Power and Privilege, argues that the ability to take a person's life is in fact the "most effective form of power" (3), since, he states, "more men will respond more readily to the threat of the use of force than to any other" (4). Although this may or may not empirically be the case, we would point out that a threat of force is something which is delivered and maintained in the realm of belief (and not just in the sphere of action alone). Nevertheless, Lenski's point-- that death is an important consideration regarding an exercise of power-- is well-taken. The realm of action, we can safely say, is in itself slightly more effective than the realm of belief in terms of exercising power: when **A** causes **B** only to believe/not-believe a concept, **A** does not

do very much. However, when **A** causes **B** to perform/not-perform an action, **A** at least does something. And, in the zone of not-performance, it is possible for **A** to cause a rather substantial effect which is the ultimate and global not-performance: **A** can kill **B**.

When the realms of action and belief are both affected, in an exercise of power, then we can say that a substantial exercise of power has taken place. That is, when **A** causes **B** to, for instance, **both** believe a concept and perform an action, **A** can likely be said to have exercised a significant amount of power. Similarly, if **A** causes **B** to not-believe a concept, and thereby to not-perform an action, **A** exercises much more power than if he merely caused some effect in either the doxastic or the active realm alone. In fact, there are several possible combinations regarding the combination of the spheres of belief and action (evidently); when **A** exercises power in both realms, then a substantial exercise has taken place. If we consider our past example of the party leader in conference with the officials from his supporting groups, we see how this is the case: the party leader (**A**), in talking to the several group leaders around the table (**B**), causes them both to believe that they should tell their people to vote for Jones, and to perform the according action. Clearly, this sort of an exercise of power is **much**

more effective than the type of power exercised in only one of the two spheres. We can, thus, give a rough general comparison between the effectiveness of exercises of powers in the active and doxastic spheres:

beliefs < actions << beliefs & actions

That is, that exercises of power located only in the sphere of action (and its zones of performance/not-performance) are usually greater than exercises of power situated only in the sphere of belief (and its zones of belief/not-belief). Exercises of power which coalesce the active and doxastic realms, however, are generally much more effective than those exercises found in one realm in particular.

Of course, although the term "effective" is incorporated in our explication of the schema, we do not necessarily mean effective with respect to what is intended, foreseen, deliberated over, preferred, or in the power-exerciser's interests. For, as we have seen, these elements are **contingently** related to exercises of power; "effective," evidently, in the context of an "effective exercise of power," is more of a rough quantitative notion, such that an "effective exercise of power" is one which has a large magnitude with respect to the effect(s) produced. Whether the effects caused by **A** accord with his

intentions/interests/etc., is another matter altogether.

Our conception of causality, too, is of no small importance to our schema. We do not, obviously, restrict causes to actual **events** (i.e. occurrences, happenings, overt behaviors) as do, for instance, some political scientists such as Lasswell and Kaplan (5). That is, we do not purport to a Hobbesian billiard-ball sort of causality, at all times. It is true that, in considering the active sphere alone, with its zones of performance and not-performance, our notion of causality is of this sort. There are exercises of power, such as was seen in our example of the police barricade, that are nothing more than **A** causing **B** to not-perform (or perform) an action, much in the way that billiard balls behave. Whenever the sphere of belief is involved, however, we can not simply apply such a mechanistic notion of "cause"; it is not clear, in an exercise of power which, for example, causes **B** to not-believe some concept, that **any overt behavior is ever affected.** Furthermore, as Bachrach & Baratz have argued, the "organizing out" (6) of issues, a phenomenon that can occur unconsciously, is indeed an exercise of power as is **B**'s unconscious adopting of **A**'s ways of life, as suggested by Partridge (7). When **A**, in this sort of instance, keeps **B** out of the political arena, by causing (or by having caused) him to believe that (for example) he

simply can not and will not be able to vote, power is exercised. A strictly mechanistic notion of causality, however, would not be able to accommodate such a real and serious scenario: no overt behavior is changed. As Ball argues in "Power, Causation & Explanation," not only "events" figure as causes; such non-"events" as "dispositions, attitudes, standing conditions, processes, etc." can and do figure as modes of causality both in our everyday discourse and in the natural and social sciences as well (8).

Furthermore, it should be noted that power is not always exercised directly between humans. That is, although we can say that power is **A**'s ability to cause effects in the active and doxastic spheres, the vehicles of causation are not always directly interpersonal. Consider our example of the orator: although his gestures are visible to most of the crowd, his voice is (let us say) amplified by a sound-system; yet, he still exercises power. We can also conceive of real and significant exercises of power, such as Churchill's radio addresses, which were completely mediated through a physical mode (the radio). And, as perhaps the best example, consider the propagandist's poster which defiles an "enemy": it can cause individuals to believe such concepts as "the enemy is not human," and can likewise incite them to perform

such actions as joining the army, buying war bonds, etc.. However, it is clearly not the poster **per se** that exercises power; rather, the poster merely (but importantly) mediates the power exercised by the "artist." In this way, we see, power is further analogous to Ricoeur's notion of distanciation: it is often effectively exercised remotely.

It is also important to descant our notion of "ability," as it is found in the schema. By arguing that power is an "ability," we do not necessarily propose that it is something which an individual deliberates over or prefers. As we have seen, such common and important phenomena as the non-conscious shaping of "preferences" [as discussed by Bachrach & Baratz (9)] are quite clearly exercises of power. Rather, to say that power is **A**'s "ability" to cause something in **B**, is to say that it is, as MacIver notes, a "relational capacity" (10) vis-à-vis **A** and **B**. In this light the distinction between manifest and latent power is much more clear. Latent power is an individual's "present means" (as Hobbes states (11)) to cause an effect in the active or doxastic spheres of another, which is an essentially universal ability. Manifest power is the actualized causing of some combination of: belief of a concept, not-belief of a concept, performance of an action, or not-performance of

an action, by **A** in **B**.

Further, the question of whether **A** or **B** can be a group becomes apparent in the examination of our schema. If all of the members of a group have the same ability with respect to an individual (**B**), then we can say that the group (**A**), has power. If one individual (**A**) has an ability regarding a group of people, we can say that (**A**) has power vis-a-vis the group (**B**). This point is not especially problematic: if, for example, a committee of congressmen inquire into an individual's behavior, they may, as a group, ultimately destroy the person's character and constitution. As a group, they have and exercise power regarding the person. If, as well, a judge passes sentence on a group of conspirators, we can safely say that the judge (**A**) exercises power over the group (**B**), as a whole.

One might remark, at this point, that our schema of power is very close to the notion of power proffered by Foucault. Although the conception of power that we are advancing is in several ways analogous to Foucault's notion of power, it is also significantly different as well. For, while Foucault is excellent with respect to, for instance, the way in which power is not acquired, not exterior to the individual, and not made manifest in a sovereign, he is not as penetrating or incisive apropos of the question of intentionality, and whether

power is necessarily tied to discourse.

In The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, Foucault begins his second chapter, "Method," with some keen insight into the relational nature of power:

> The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.
>
> (12)

Foucault's observations, here, accord with our own: there is a ubiquity of power, since it is in continuous and widespread production. Clearly, in the explication of our schematic conceptualization of power, we have acknowledged that even **A**'s causing **B** to simply **believe a concept** is an exercise of power. Since such a phenomenon frequently and regularly occurs in, most commonly, discursive practices (e.g. speech and communication), we would agree with Foucault that power does essentially "come from everywhere," and is "omnipresent."

Further, in the same volume of The History of Sexuality, Foucault argues that power is "not something that is acquired, seized, or shared" (13), and that it is not something which is in a "position of exteriority" to the individual (14). Rather, he maintains, power is immanent in, for instance, "knowledge relationships,

economic processes, (and) sexual relations." That is, power relations play a directly productive role in socio-political occurrences (15).

While Foucault's characterization of power, as we find it in Vol. 1 of The History of Sexuality, does indeed appear to be very amenable to our own in these respects, there is an important point of divergence to be found in this work, as well. Foucault maintains that power is always exercised with "aims," "objectives," and "tactics":

> Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective...they are imbued, through and through, with calculation: **there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives** (emphasis added).
>
> (16)

The notions of "calculation" and "objective," as described in the passage, show a clear demarcation between our notion of power and Foucault's: we have acknowledged that power is in fact often exercised exactly as Bachrach & Baratz have suggested-- unconsciously, and outside of that which Oppenheim has called "deliberation" (17). Foucault does explain himself, maintaining that while power is exercised in the fashion suggested above, it does not mean that it results from the "choice or decision of an individual subject" (18): power, he states, does not have a rational headquarters; rather, it is best characterized by "explicit" and "perfectly clear" local tactics which have often had neither a specific inventor, nor a

particular formulator (19). Gilles Deleuze, in conversation with Foucault [as found in the essay "Intellectuals and Power" (20)], gives a pithy version of Foucault's notion:

> Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts. All of us are "groupuscules." (21)

Foucault's position, then, is that power is codified and directed in localized tactics; however, it is not "presided over" by some specific and rational sovereign which controls its use (e.g. a state, a subject). Rather, it is a segmented and (as he writes in "Theatrum Philosophicum") "dispersed multiplicity" (22) to which this notion of intentionality applies. Furthermore, in his essay "Disciplinary Power and Subjection" (23), Foucault proposes that the individual is in fact one of the "prime effects" (24) of power, that "the individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle" (25). This latter consideration is not a point with which we will take issue; it appears to be quite trivially true that the continuous and diversified exercises of power which we encounter, do affect ourselves (i.e our beliefs, attitudes, and bodies).

Nevertheless, in evincing the correspondence between Foucault's eloquent conception of power and our own, our

notion of what power is still proves to be importantly distinct: we argue, in a vein similar to Bachrach & Baratz, that power is only contingently related to such considerations as "tactics," "strategies," and "aims" (26) Rather, we maintain, power is often exercised by an (arguably segmented) individual outside of **any sort** of calculations or deliberation, and that the **problem** of power, truly, is **how to align** that which we **intend, prefer**, and find in our **interests, with our actual exercises of power.**

Foucault's conception of power, we see, does indeed have a further point of strength. In "Truth and Power," he argues that power is not necessarily repressive; that it is not, as we elucidated with respect to Lukes' and Connolly's positions, always exercised **against** the interests of one or another. He writes:

> In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power; one identifies power with a law which says no; power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition. Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread...What makes power hold good...is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.
>
> (27)

In other words, power is argued to be a widespread and productive phenomenon: it does not simply "repress" or prohibit"; it produces knowledge, discourse, and pleasure. In this way, evidently, to conceive of power as something which holds an individual down, or represses them, is not to adequately grasp the purview of power. Power is, Foucault avers (and, as we have argued), not merely something which prevents knowledge, violates interests, and induces displeasure in and through its exercise.

There is a final distinction between Foucault's notion of power and our own, apropos of the question of the salience of the discursive realm. Foucault appears to argue, in "Disciplinary Power and Subjection," that power is only exercised in and through so-called philosophical discourse. He states that there is a "triangle" which forms between "power, right, and truth," and that there can be no possible exercise of power "without a certain economy of discourses of truth" which is seen by him to operate in a productive, circulative, and accumulative fashion (28). That is to say, Foucault seems to argue that discourse is a necessary criterion with respect to an exercise of power, since, he believes, relationships of power "cannot themselves be established" without the required element of discourse.

Although, with reference to our conception and schema

of power, we might agree that many if not most exercises of power take place in and through the presence of discourse, we would point out that some exercises of power do not require the discursive space, specifically, in the cases of some exercises of power which are located only in the zones of performance and not-performance. Let us consider the following historical example: a colonialist Field Marshall conquers a native army, and attempts to "persuade" its leader to sign a document stating that his people submit themselves to colonial rule. However, the native leader can not speak the language of the colonialists, and, as a result, the flustered field Marshall forces a signature of sorts from the native leader. In such a scenario, there is essentially no discursive element present in the relational exercise of power: the two individuals-in-question do not engage in meaningful discourse. Yet, quite clearly, the Marshall exercises power with respect to the leader: he makes the leader sign a document, that is, to perform an action.

The unnecessary nature of discourse regarding exercises of power, is further elucidated in actual examples of A causing B to not-perform an action. Consider, for instance, the following scenario which has been actualized a rather large number of times in history: a group of foreign soldiers gathers together a number of happy and

ignorant people who are quite oblivious to the nature of the soldiers weapons (having, say, never seen any such weapons before). The people speak a language which is thoroughly distinct from that of the soldiers. If the soldiers suddenly execute them all, we would have to say that **A** exercises power regarding **B**: the soldiers, in killing the people, cause them to not-perform any more actions. And, we would likely agree that the discursive realm is not incorporated in this exercise of power at all: the trusting people, unaware of any danger, can not communicate with the soldiers. Thus, it would appear as though at least some rather significant phenomena, as are caused an the zones of performance and not-performance, take place without the element of discourse that Foucault claims is necessary.

What, then, of power? Our investigation has lead us to some chary conclusions. Of the schematic characterizations of power that we have seen, many have proven to be too narrow and restrictive: some attempt to delimit the realm of power in terms of the individual interests of those who exercise power or undergo its effects. Others have proffered conceptions which incorporate the intentions of **A**, or that which **A** prefers, can foresee, deliberates over, etc.. Unfortunately, we seem to have determined that all such schemas are too

narrow; they cannot account for some ostensive and apparent exercises of power, such as the one exemplified in our scenario with the demagogue and his group leaders. It would appear to be the case that a schema which truly grasps power in its essence, and which is comprehensive, is the one which is cast in terms of the spheres of belief and action, and is further divided into zones of belief & not-belief, performance & not-performance.

We have seen how power is, as many writers have suggested, ubiquitous; however, it is also quite neutral--that is, power does not necessarily favor anyone. An exercise of power can backfire upon an individual, essentially countermanding both that which the person intends to do, and that which is in their interest. In such a light, it appears quite clear that the notion of responsibility proposed by some theorists (e.g. Connolly) is quite unreasonable: it seems to be absurd to hold an individual responsible for that which operates outside of their intentions, preferences, deliberations, what they can foresee, and even their own interests. Truly, these visceral and "human" considerations are, ironically, contingently related to exercises of socio-political power: they are sometimes there, but they do not have to be present.

Furthermore, power is revealed to be an essentially

contested concept; yet, it is not for any sort of normative reason or criterion. Rather, power is most truly captured in a non-normative schema, which acknowledges its ubiquitous yet neutral nature. As a concept, we have stated, power is essentially contestable due to its complex essence. However, we have seen how this by no means indicates that the notion of degrees of contestability is not viable. What we have attempted to do, and, it would seem, have succeeded in doing, is to conduct an investigation into the nature of power, so as to ultimately construct a schema which is less contestable than the rest. And, it is clear, we have eschewed the normative considerations of, for instance, how power "should be used" as much as is possible: we have used no explicitly normative terms in the construction of our schema, and we have not, in the explication of our schema, argued that some uses of power are "better" or "worse" than others, or that some power-exercisers are deserving of praise or blame; in fact, we have explicitly maintained that power itself is a neutral concept. How power should be used, we will say, is a matter which can take place after one knows what it is; if we are any closer to knowledge of what power is, perhaps we can proceed to an investigation of how it is best accommodated.

The theorist, it comes clear, who most closely approximates our notion of power, is Foucault. His exceptionally insightful remarks regarding the ubiquity and omnipresence of power, and the consideration of how power is neither acquired nor purely exterior to the individual, portray his genius. Further, that power is not necessarily repressive, and that it is productive of individuals, are two ideas which our schema accommodates, and with which we agree. However, we diverge from Foucault on two crucial points: first, with respect to his idea of calculation; he maintains that all power is characterized by tactics, strategies, and aims, at the nonsubjective level. Aside from the fact that, for instance, tactics, aims, and strategies all appear to be notions which require conscious consideration (and therefore, **a fortiori**, a cognizant, thinking subject), we have seen how some germane and effective exercises of power are actualized unconsciously. Second, we do not agree with Foucault apropos of the question of whether discourse is required for all exercises of power; there are, apparently, some rather significant exercises of power in the zone of not-performance, which do not seem to embody discourse of any sort.

The notion of Ricoeurian distanciation, finally, is without question one which is of immeasurable importance

to our conception of power. Ricoeur's five modes of distanciation, realized in the phenomenon of the text, correspond well with the five human considerations of intention, interest, deliberation, preference, and foreseeability which we have argued to be separated from power by a wide interstice. In a parallel fashion, the five distanciations of the text are in an important way indicative of the human condition: although we are existentially required for the exercise of socio-political power, power is yet exercised in a way which is apart from us.

Furthermore, and finally, Ricoeur maintains that distanciation is both the precondition and problem of understanding, and that distanciation is that which understanding must overcome, to achieve, in part, an understanding of the conditions that were. However, we realize that, as individuals in the world, ours is not a struggle to return to that which was; rather, we must attempt to live in a realm where our most meaningful human considerations--our intentions, interests, and preferences-- are merely contingently related to the constitutive and permeating phenomenon of power.

ENDNOTES to CHAPTER SIX:

1) Gallie, p. 171
2) Connolly (1974), p. 32
3) Lukes (1986), p. 243.
4) **ibid.**
5) Lasswell & Kaplan, p. xiv.
6) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), pp. 43-44.
7) Partridge (1963), p. 114.
8) Ball (1975), p. 196.
9) Bachrach & Baratz (1970), p. 8.
10) MacIver, p. 42.
11) Hobbes, Leviathan, X, 7, 41.
12) Foucault (1978), p. 93.
13) Foucault (1978), p. 94.
14) **ibid.**
15) **ibid.**
16) Foucault (1978), pp. 94-5
17) Oppenheim (1961), p. 92.
18) Foucault (1978), p. 95.
19) **ibid.**
20) The essay "Intellectuals and Power" is found in Foucault's work Language, Counter-memory, Practice.
21) Foucault (1977), p. 206.
22) Foucault (1977), p. 185.
23) Foucault (1977), p. 234.
24) **ibid.**
25) **ibid.**
26) Foucault (1978), pp. 94-95.
27) Rabinow (1984), p. 61.
28) Lukes (1986), p. 229.

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